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Painkulam Rama Chakyar as Ravana performing the lifting of the Kailasa mountain in Abhishekanatakam.

Kootiyattam

(A General Survey)

K. Kunjunni Raja

The Kootiyattam¹ of Kerala is perhaps the only form of the ancient Sanskrit drama that survives in performance today. It has been kept alive in the temple theatres of Kerala (which are known as Koothampalams) by members of the Chakyar and Nambyar communities. The Kootiyattam has a continuous tradition extending for more than a thousand years. A close comparative study of the stage practice of this theatre, with the prescriptions given in detail in Bharata's *Natyashastra* and the references to the actual staging of Sanskrit plays found in later works like the *Kuttanimata*, reveals that the Kerala tradition of staging Sanskrit plays follows, on the whole, the procedure adopted in other parts of India in ancient times. At the same time, it

¹ Kootiyattam is also spelt as Kutiyattam or Kudiyattam.

points to various special features mostly developed in Kerala to suit the taste of the audiences there. A detailed analysis of the descriptive and historical aspects of the Kootiyattam, is, therefore, essential for an understanding of the ancient Sanskrit stage in India.

The history of the Sanskrit stage in Kerala goes back to at least the tenth century A.D. This is when King Kulashekhara Varman of Mahodayapura, the author of the two dramas *Subhadradhananjaya* and *Tapatisamvarana*, is said to have reformed the Sanskrit stage with the help of a Brahmin scholar, who was popularly known as Tolan, and may probably be identified as the author of the *Vyangya* commentaries on them. King Kulashekhara Varman's innovations included the introduction of the Malayalam language by the Vidushaka to explain the Sanskrit and Prakrit passages of the texts. The Vidushaka often used a macaronic Sanskrit-Malayalam, a mixed language called *Manipravala*. In the case of the Prakrit passages recited by him or by others in his presence, he used to give the Sanskrit *Chaya* (rendering) and then explain its meaning in Malayalam. He also added his own parodies or *Pratishlokas* of some of the verses recited by the hero in his presence. He often inserted *Chayashlokas* or parallel passages, referring to his own condition.

Another innovation was the humorous element which consisted of such extraneous matter as the parody on the *Purusharthas*. This formed part of the narration of the early life (*Nirvahana*) of the Vidushaka. The four *Purusharthas*, sanctified by tradition, are replaced by the four aims of existence of a corrupt society. These are described as *Asana* (food), *Vinoda* (enjoyment of sexual pleasures), *Vanchana* (deception) and *Rajaseva* (serving a king). The Vidushaka is the most prominent and the most popular figure in Kootiyattam and Koothu. In course of time he came to overshadow all the other characters in a play.

Didactic and cultural elements were gradually introduced; stories from the epics and Puranas were added—and sometimes even when they were quite irrelevant—so that the stage was used in an interesting manner as a vehicle for adult education and for the moral uplift of the people.

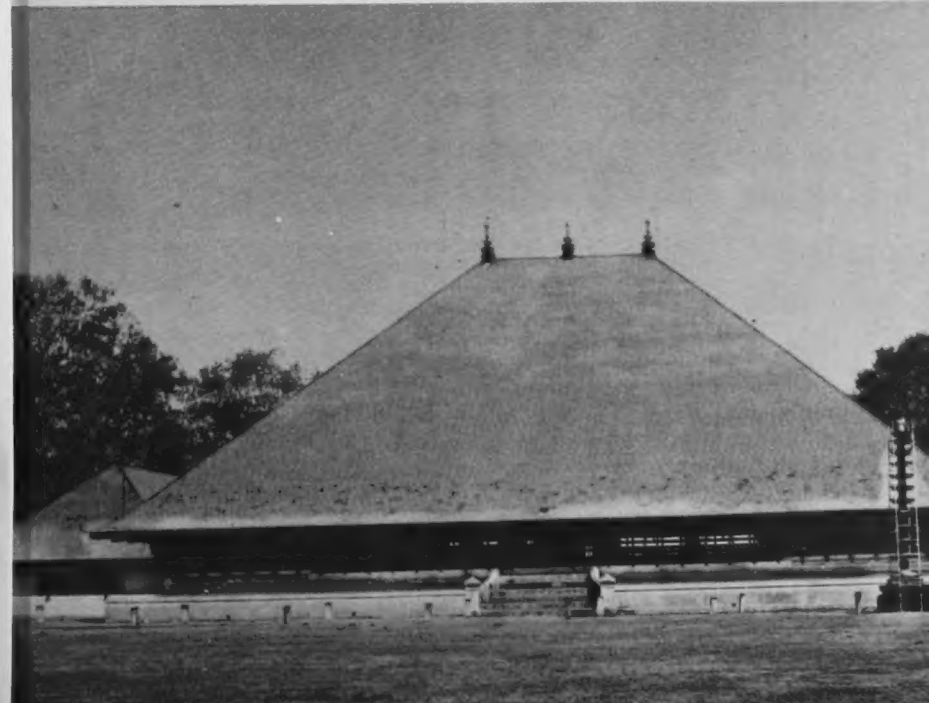
Thus in the *Mantraka* scene of the *Pratijnayaugandharayana* of Bhasa the Vidushaka is made to approach the mother of King Udayana and to console her by narrating the story of Rama. The Vidushaka expounded Puranic episodes, lacing the didactic element with humour, and making veiled references to contemporary problems. His role in a play developed as an independent temple art called Koothu; it included the exposition of Puranic stories without connecting them in any rigorous manner with a drama. The Koothu came to be performed in the temple theatres by the Chakyar dressed as the Vidushaka. This type of story-telling when it was performed outside the temple precincts by others came to be called *Pathaka*. Several Sanskrit texts were written by scholars like Melpputtur Narayana Bhatta for such expositions of Puranic stories.

The Kootiyattam is a form of art restricted to the temple; it is performed only in the Koothampalams or theatres within the precincts of temples

and enacted by members of the Chakyar and Nambyar communities. The role of the hero or other male characters can be played only by a Chakyar. The women of the Chakyar community, who are called *Illottamma*, have nothing to do with the stage. The role of the heroine and other female characters is to be taken by the Nangyar, the women of the Nambyar community. The vocal music is also supplied by Nangyars, who keep the *tala* with the *Kuzhitala* cymbals. The Nambyar plays on the *Mizhavu* drum. He also acts as the *sutradhara* for the introductory *purappad* and narrates in brief (in Malayalam) the story which is to be enacted.

At a time only a single act from a drama is staged. The actual staging of a whole act lasts three to five nights; the introduction of characters (*Nirvahana*) and the preliminaries alone often take up twenty to thirty days. Of the popular scenes, *Mantraka* (Act Three of Bhasa's *Pratijnayaugandharayana*) is the most important and is depicted very elaborately. Shaktibhadra's *Ascharyachudamani*; *Subhadradhananjaya* and *Tapatisamvarana*, the two plays of Kulashekhara Varman; *Mattavilasa prahasana* by the Pallava king Mahendravikrama and some more plays ascribed to Bhasa like *Abhisheka*, *Pratima* and *Svapnavasavadatta* and Harsha's *Nagananda* are also in the Chakyar's

The Koothampalam theatre in Vatakkunnatha temple, Trichur.





The stage inside the Koothampalam, Trichur.

repertoire. Stage manuals for *Bhagavadajjukiya* are available. There is a tradition that *Shakuntala* used to be staged in former times.

Probably the all-India tradition of staging Sanskrit plays was revived by the Pallava kings of South India in the sixth and seventh centuries, and it spread to Kerala from there. The Kerala tradition says that King Kulasekhara Varman revived and reformed the Sanskrit stage. This means that it must have been in existence even earlier. The terms *Koothu* (dance) and *Chakaiyan* (dancer) are found in the ancient Tamil classic *Cilappatikaram*; but it is not certain whether these had anything to do with the staging of Sanskrit plays.

Koothampalam

Koothampalam is the Malayalam name used for the theatre structures in the precincts of temples in Kerala where single acts of select Sanskrit plays are staged. It corresponds to the *natyamandapa* of Sanskrit texts. More than a dozen such theatres are still preserved in various temples; the present structures of the Koothampalams are not much older than three hundred years, but the tradition of staging goes back to much earlier times. The theatre at the Vatakkunnatha temple at Trichur is the largest. Most of the Koothampalams are rectangular; the interior stage structure within the auditorium is square in shape. Chengannoor had an oval-shaped theatre, but now only its base is extant. These theatres do not conform strictly to the directions found in the *Natyashastra*, but follow the main rules of construction laid down in the Sanskrit texts of Kerala like the *Tantrasamucchaya* (fifteenth century) of Narayana and the *Shilparatna* of Shrikumara (sixteenth century). Koothampalams still stand at the Vatakkunnatha temple at Trichur, the Koodalmanikya temple at Irinjalakkuda, the Shiva temple at Perumanam (in ruins), the temples at Guruvayur, Kottappadi, Tiruvegappura, Tirumozhikkulam, Trippunittura, Ettumanoor, Kitangur, Arpukkar, Harippad, Neeleswaram, Talipparamba and Panniyur (in ruins). Inscriptional evidence is available for the existence in former times of theatres at Avittathoor and Tiruvanchikkulam. Where the temples did not have a Koothampalam, the Kootiyattam was allowed to be performed in *agrashala* halls. At the Tripprayam Rama temple where there is no Koothampalam, the *Anguliyanka* scene from Shaktibhadra's *Ascharyachudamani* is staged in the *mukhamandapa* right in front of the main shrine.

The Koothampalam is located in front of the shrine on its right side. It belongs to the class of *Prasada* structure. Though the sizes differ, all the structures follow a similar pattern. The roof is an enormous, four-sided structure, rectangular in shape, and slopes downwards in a steep manner; it is supported on beams resting on rows of pillars. The outer roof is either copper-plated or tiled with decorative flat tiles. At the top there are three finials or *tazhikkudams*.

Inside the large auditorium is the raised stage; it is usually square shaped. It has a roof of its own, supported by round pillars. The outer edge of the stage which faces the god of the temple is built in alignment with the middle finial; thus the stage projects into the auditorium. In front of the stage is the special portion reserved for the Brahmins. The roof covering the stage is an independent structure, not part of the roof of the auditorium, and helps in the effective projection of the sound from the stage. At the back of the stage is the green-room, connected to it by two doors. Between these two doors are placed two *mizhavus* or big drums, with raised seats for the drummers.

The stage is very simple. There are one or two stools meant as seats and used for other stage business. A curtain is brought in by two persons at the time of the first entry of the main characters. During a performance the stage is decorated with palm and plantain leaves, red cloth

and a cylindrical vessel (*para*) filled with rice. A huge lamp, about four feet high, made of bell metal is placed in front of the stage; it is lighted with oil and wicks, two wicks facing the actor and one facing the audience.

Stage Manuals

In addition to the continuous tradition of the method of staging handed down from generation to generation, there are actual stage manuals giving choreographic details and elaborate instructions regarding the staging of plays. These stage manuals are the *Kramadipika* and *Attaparakaram*. The former is written in Sanskrit or Malayalam and explains the procedure to be adopted for the staging of plays. It deals with the songs, dance-steps, *ragas* and various stage directions. The latter indicates acting methods, the meaning of passages in the text and is in the form of a continuous, moving story, enabling the actor to expound the text accurately. Besides, there is the text in Malayalam which is to be spoken by the *Vidushaka*; it explains the meanings of the Sanskrit passages spoken by the hero, and contains the matter which is added to produce humour. Some of the commentaries on Sanskrit dramas also contain much useful material for the actors. The story of the scenes which are to be enacted, is summarised in archaic, Malayalam sentences; this part is recited by the *Nambyar* at the beginning of the performance and is called *Nambyarute Tamil*; it is available for some of the select scenes, usually staged. There is a Sanskrit text called *Hastalakshana dipika*, giving the rules of hand poses; it is mainly based on Bharata's *Natyashastra*. It was prepared for the use of the *Chakyars*, and is used even today in the training of Kathakali actors. Another interesting work shedding light on the Kerala Sanskrit stage is a Sanskrit work called *Natankusa*. This work severely criticises the *Kootiyattam* for taking liberties with the text and for adding unnecessary and extraneous matter.

Actors

It is said that formerly there were eighteen *Chakyar* families; but now there are only about half a dozen families which preserve the tradition: (1) The *Ammannoor Chakyar* family at Irinjalakkuda, (2) The *Koypa Chakyar* family at Painkulam and also at Tirumoozhikkulam, (3) The *Maniyoor Chakyar* at Killikkurissimangalam in Lakkiddi, originally part of Talipparamba in North Kerala; (4) *Kuttancheri Chakyar* at Naliuvay, (5) *Potiyil Chakyar* and (6) *Kitangoor Chakyar*. The late *Cacchu Chakyar* belonged to the Irinjalakkuda family; *Padmashri Natyacharya Mani Madhava Chakyar* belongs to the Maniyur family and *Painkulam Rama Chakyar*, now teaching at the Kerala Kala Mandalam, belongs to the *Koypa* family. Many of the *Nambyar* families are related to the *Chakyar* families through hypergamous matrimonial relationships.

Instrumental Music

The instruments used for the *Kootiyattam* include: (1) The *Mizhavu*. The two drums called *mizhavu* are of slightly varying sizes; they are two to three feet high, and are made of copper. The mouth is tightly covered with calf skin. Members of the *Nambyar* community sit facing the audience



Sthapana Sutradhara performing the *Nityakriya*. Two *Mizhavu* drums and the players.

on seats arranged near the top of the drum stand. They play on them with their hands: one of them keeps the *tala*, while the other plays the *vinyasas*, using both the palms and the fingers. For *Koothu* just one *mizhavu* is sufficient. (2) The *Kuzhithalam* or a pair of bronze cymbals is used for keeping the *tala*; it is used by the *Nangyar* who also chants the verses for the introductory *Nirvahana*, the *dhrupa* songs recited at the time of the entrance and exit of characters. (3) The *Kuzhal* or *Kurumkuzhal*, a double reed pipe, is employed to suggest the rhythm or play the *jatis*, and indicate the proper tunes or produce a melodious refrain in the background. (4) The *Idakka* or 'a tunable, double-faced, pressure drum' is held by means of a piece of cloth hanging from the left shoulder of the standing drummer; the tension strings are manipulated by the left hand and the drumming is continued with a thin stick held in the right hand. This delicate and sensitive drum is also played in temples, and for the *Panchavadya* type of instrumental orchestra. (5) The auspicious *Shankha* or conch shell is blown when important personalities appear for the first time on the stage.

Abhinaya

The *abhinaya* for *Kootiyattam* is highly conventionalised and to a great extent follows the precepts of the *Natyashastra*. The *Purappadu* and the preliminary rites such as the dance sequences shed considerable light on the way the Prologue was performed in ancient Sanskrit dramas. The songs which invoke the deities, *Ganapati*, *Saraswati* and *Shiva* are known as *akkitta*. Then the *Nambyar* fetches sacred water from the green-room and

sprinkles it on the stage, reciting the *mangalashloka*. These preliminary rites last for one day. The introduction of the earlier life of the hero (prior to the incidents to be actually staged) is called *Nirvahana*; it is very elaborate in its scope and continues for a few days. These earlier portions are expanded or reduced to suit the actual circumstances. The actual Kootiyattam or combined action takes place on the last three nights.

There are four types of *abhinaya*:

(i) *Angika* is the technique of using hand poses and gestures and stage movement to represent ideas. It is mainly based on the teachings of the *Natyashastra*. For example, in the first act of *Subhadradhananjaya*, Arjuna saves the heroine without knowing who she is. Her beauty casts its spell on him. He says:

नवकुलवधाम्नोरञ्जनस्निग्धमङ्गलः
भयचलपूति युग्मं केयमालोलयन्ती।
सुखपरिमललोमाद् धृङ्गत्तानुयात्रा
शिथिलयति सुमद्रामुद्रितं मानसं मे॥

The actor who plays Arjuna needs four hours to explain this verse through gestures. He gazes at Subhadra, describes her, beginning with the hair. He stops when he comes to the eyes, and recites this verse very slowly in the *raga* called *Arttan* indicating the meaning of each word through hand gesture. Then the gestures are repeated, but the verse is not recited. Not only the number and gender of words, but even the nature of the compounds is suggested through hand gestures. Then the verse is taken up the third time. This time it is the syntax, the *anvaya* which matters. He says the words, *iyam ka*, "What sort of a girl is she? What is her name? Who is her father?" His gestures indicate these queries. Then he stops. "Why should this bother me?" Then he goes on to the words *me manasam shithilayati* and again expounds it in detail till he comes to *Subhadramuditram*, when he assumes the posture of Subhadra and suggests how she enters his heart. Her eyes are beautified by collyrium, *anjanasnigdham*. To explain the idea, he enacts a story. The heroine calls her attendants to adorn her body. The entire procedure is described, from the combing of her hair to the tying of the anklets round her feet. But something has been forgotten—applying the collyrium to the eyes. The Chakya becomes the heroine, her attendants and even Arjuna himself.

The *Angikabhinaya* consists not only in explaining the meanings of the text, but also in indicating the nature of the character whose role is played by the actor. Thus in *Abhishekanataka* as soon as Sugriva enters, he holds the tree-branches, shakes them, scratches his head, smells the tip of his tail to show that he is a monkey. After he has done this he assumes the posture of Sugriva, king of the monkeys. In Kootiyattam the actor has to confine himself to the space between his shoulders during the hand gestures. This is unlike what happens in Kathakali where the actor can stretch his arms to any length.

(ii) *Vachika* or verbal recitation. Here the actor himself slowly recites his text, and then uses the language of gesture in detail.



Mani Madhava Chakya in Asokavanikanka in Ascharyachudamani.

There is no regular music in Kootiyattam but there are different modes of reciting the verses or even the prose passages; the modes depend on various factors, such as the type of the character who is reciting them, the nature of the situation described and the sentiments conveyed. These modes of recitation have different technical names such as *Indala*, *Tarkan*, *Veladhooli*. These are called *ragas*, even if these *ragas* have very little to do with the *ragas* of Indian music. Some of these like *Srikamaram*, *Poranir* and *Tarkan* are found in the *Panns* of ancient Tamil music; some like *Indalam*, *Srikanthi* are again preserved in modern Kathakali songs. It is very difficult

to identify and distinguish these Kootiyattam *ragas*; the modes of recitation have been handed down from teacher to student, without any precise theoretical definitions. However there are detailed instructions as to the usage of these recitation *ragas*: *Antari* is used for narration; *Veladhooli* is for shouting and indicates fear and perplexity; *Srikamara* suggests unexpected joy; *Tarkan* indicates anger; the use of *Veera Tarkan* denotes enthusiasm; *Kaisika* is for *hasya* and *bibhatsa*; *Poranir* is used in describing the rainy season, *Korakurinji* is used for the words of monkeys. *Indala* is the normal *raga* for the Vidushaka. Some correlations between *ragas* and *talas* are formulated in the stage manuals. In *Vachikabhinaya* the Vidushaka sometimes explains the significance of even the pure sounds of words uttered. In *Subhadradhananjaya*, the Vidushaka hears the words *Sakhe Kaudinya*. First he hears the sound *eee*; he says it is like the waves in the pond. Then *khe* which he thinks is like the croaking of frogs in a pond. He is reminded of his boyhood prank of wounding frogs and finally it strikes him that it is his friend Arjuna calling out to him. The hero gives prominence to those scenes where there is scope for *Angikabhinaya*; the Vidushaka to those where there is scope for *Vachikabhinaya*. He speaks his own lines and also those of the hero and explains them.

(iii) *Aharya* denotes costume and make-up. This is similar to that of Kathakali, but simpler. The *Chutti* (the lining made with rice flour paste) which is applied round the cheek and the chin is narrower, and the headgear is also smaller. Different types of make-up like *Pacca*, *Pazhukkua*, *Kari* and *Katti* are used. The magnanimous have the *Pazhukkua* make-up, with the face painted in a reddish colour. The haughty types like Ravana have the *Katti* make-up, with a round ball painted at the tip of the nose.

Formerly certain spectacular stage effects were achieved. In the Fourth Act of the *Nagananda*, thousands of strings were tied to the artificial wings of the actor playing Garuda and he used to slide down from above the stage space. The strings were manipulated by the Nambyar. In *Tapatisamvarna*, the river was depicted by thousands of strings kept tightly in a horizontal way and the idea of *ozhukal* (flowing) was suggested. The suicide scene in *Nagananda* with Malayavati trying to hang herself, or the sequence in *Ascharyachudamani* where Lakshman deforms Surpanakha were staged with an eye for realistic detail.

(iv) *Sattvika* is the representation of moods and the emotions. With the help of delicate movements of the eyes, brows, lips, and cheeks, but without any gestures of the hand, the actor is able to produce facial expressions which correspond to a particular mood. In this *Sattvikabhinaya* the Chakyar is supreme and has not been surpassed or even equalled by the Kathakali actors.

Since music and recitation are integral to the Kootiyattam, *talas* or rhythmic patterns play a very important part in the performance. The female musician, Nangyar, keeps the *tala* with the help of the *Kuzhitalam* cymbals. The drummers, seated at the back of the stage, behind the actor, and facing the *mizhavu* keep the *tala*; one of them merely keeps the *tala* and the other

plays the appropriate *jatis* or *vinyasas* for the various *talas* to give proper effect to the acting. Six different *talas* are generally used, depending on the *raga* (mode of recitation) employed. There are detailed rules prescribing particular *talas* for particular *ragas* and specific occasions.

1. *Ektala* of four beats (*matras*) is used for the *ragas* *Srikanthi*, *Thondu*, *Poranir*, *Kaisika*, *Indala*, *Bhinna Panchama* and *Dukkha Gandhara*. It is used also for *hasya* and *bibhatsa* *rasas* and for the *adbhuta* *rasa* of *dhirodatttha* characters.

2. *Dhruvatala* of fourteen beats is used for the *ragas* *Muddan*, *Tarkan* and *Korakurinji*, and in *adbhuta*, *bhayanaka*, *sambhoga shringara* (of *rakshasas*) and *vipralambha shringara* of *dhirodatttha* characters.

3. *Triputatala* of seven beats, used when *veladhooli* is the *raga* and for *bhayanaka* *rasa*. *Triputa* of slow tempo is used in *Ghattantari* *raga*; it is in a fast tempo in the case of *Srikamara* and *Paurali* *ragas*.

4. *Champatala* of eight beats is used for the instrumental orchestra before the start of the play.

5. *Thampatala* of ten beats is the same as *Jhampa* of Karnatic music.

6. *Atanta* of fourteen beats is used while repeating what another has said. For different types of dance pieces or modes of gait different *talas* have been prescribed.

Till very recently the Kootiyattam, being a religious art, was strictly confined to the precincts of the temples of Kerala. It was only in 1960 that the first public performance of the Kootiyattam outside the temple precincts was staged at Calicut before a select audience invited by All India Radio. A portion from Act One of the *Subhadradhananjaya* was staged by Painkulam Rama Chakyar and his party. I made a preliminary survey of Kootiyattam in 1960; this survey was published in the *Samskrita Ranga Annual*, II. Other public performances of the Kootiyattam followed—at the Kalamandalam in 1962 arranged by Dr. Clifford Jones of the University of Pennsylvania; a show was arranged in Madras under the auspices of the Samskrita Ranga in 1963, and in New Delhi under the auspices of the Sangeet Nataka Akademi and the Pederewski Foundation. It was Natyacharya Mani Madhava Chakyar and his party who gave the performances at Madras and at New Delhi. Enthusiastic encouragement was given to this activity by scholars like Dr. V. Raghavan. My paper on Kootiyattam was republished as a booklet by the Sangeet Nataka Akademi. The Madras University produced a M. Litt thesis on Kootiyattam and another doctoral thesis was written in Poona. In 1966 a seminar on Kootiyattam was arranged at Cheruthurutti; it was sponsored jointly by the Kerala Kalamandalam and the American Institute of Indian Studies, on the enthusiastic initiative of Dr. Clifford Jones, the well-known Western scholar of art and theatre history. Mani Madhava Chakyar has prepared a scholarly work in Malayalam on the theory and practice of the Kootiyattam, and it is to be published by the Kerala Kalamandalam, where

a department of Kootiyattam was started in 1967, with Painkulam Rama Chakyar as professor. Dr. Clifford Jones is now in India preparing a documentary film and a descriptive monograph on the technique and practice of this one surviving form of the classical Sanskrit-based dramatic tradition. The Kerala Kalamandalam and other scholars in the field are co-operating with him in this effort and it is to be hoped that more light will be shed on our ancient drama as a result of this awakening of interest in the subject.

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A still from *Pather Panchali*

Looking Back

Karuna Banerjee

I was made up for a colour test with wrinkles and lines and streaks of gray hair—for *Kanchanjanga*. But Subrata Mitra was not satisfied. "Put some more wrinkles", he told the make-up man. I was not at all happy to play the role of a mother of grown-up children. "You should keep in reserve a few more wrinkles for the time when I play the role of Chhabi Babu's mother", was my caustic remark. "Wait", a bass voice spoke from behind, "when I shoot *Pather Panchali* in colour, you will play the role of Indir Thakrun", and with those words Satyajit beat a hasty retreat before I could effectively react. That was in 1961.

I had already worked with him in three of his films, the first two being the first two parts of the Apu trilogy. *Pather Panchali* was Satyajit's initial effort at making a feature film; it was also Subrata Mitra's first experience of handling a movie camera. Only Bansi Chandra Gupta had to his credit some background of work on designing sets for films. I myself was brand new, with no experience whatsoever in film acting. In fact, the thought had never entered my head before, even though I had regularly acted with the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA) for a period of more than two years.

Twenty years ago it was not the most natural thing in the world for a woman from a middle-class family to act in a film. It was not a comfortable thought for me either; and I tried hard to wriggle out of the whole situation. But disowning all conventional norms, my husband and my in-laws became great enthusiasts for this venture. They regarded the whole proposition as an interesting experiment. My husband had great faith in Satyajit, who was an old friend. So I walked into the whole adventure rather half-heartedly, but before long, I, too, became one of his team. I felt equally involved and concerned when *Pather Panchali* faced a financial crisis on two occasions and when shooting had to be stopped for want of funds.

Looking back I think that the watchword of the whole atmosphere was *involvement*. Young, eager faces working as a perfect team gave an impetus to all of us. There was the towering central figure who spoke very little and never raised his voice. Yet he was decidedly the leader of the team, inspiring people to ignore the sun and the rains or any physical discomfort. Always there was an atmosphere of something happening. Everything was so exciting. The dog ran for shelter from the rains and shook himself vigorously. Satyajit was terribly excited about this business of the dog's behaviour which was absolutely unscheduled. The fly started walking over Sarbajaya's sleeping face. Another exciting event. Satyajit's wife was full of admiration. "How come you did not move?" they asked me. "But I was already asleep!" I protested. The conch-shell bangle must slip down Sarbajaya's wrist when Harihar comes back and Sarbajaya, sitting in front of the boiling pot, has to react, but very slightly. I remember taking infinite pains to powder my wrist; otherwise the perspiration would not have allowed the bangle to move. This was, of course, part of Satyajit's direction. We breathed in the atmosphere of a dilapidated village house surrounded by large old mango trees, casting long shadows long before sundown, children romping about, the old woman muttering to herself. Chunibala Devi, that wonderful old lady whose brain was so fully alive in spite of her age, would complain about the torn cloth she had to wear. "I may be old but after all I am also a woman", she used to say. But when Bansi prepared a dhoti which was not so torn, she refused to wear it for fear of spoiling the continuity.

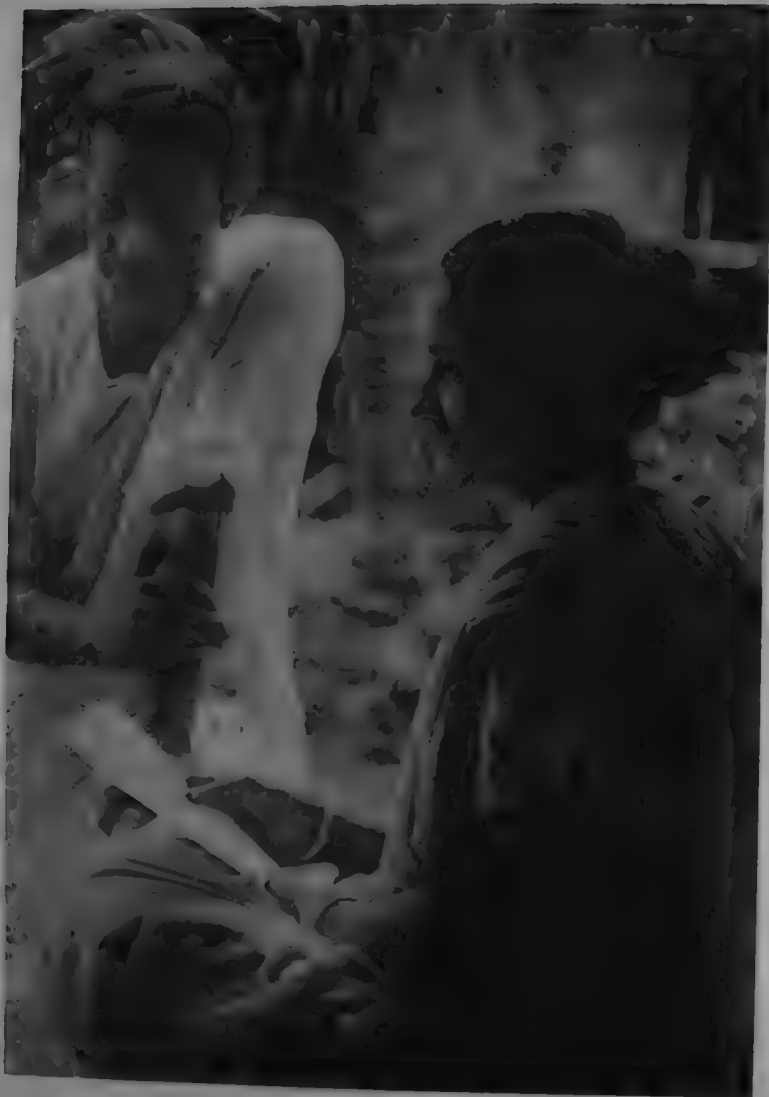
To be frank—I never felt I was acting a particular role. Satyajit gave me the written dialogue, and explained in his usual low voice the situation, the mood. He then left it to me to execute the whole thing. We did not rehearse much, and we rehearsed only on the spot. But I knew what helped

me most. As soon as I wrapped round myself that thick-spun mill sari, made a large *bindi* on my forehead, tied a bun high on my head, wore those conch-shell bangles, that *nakchabi* (nose ring) and that *maduli*, I felt a completely different soul. I never thought of the screen; I never thought of the film. Satyajit never spoke to me in those terms. He would not criticise me, neither would he pay me a compliment. But once right at the beginning, I was shown a few rush prints, and I could immediately spot what was wrong with me. For example, a scene on the verandah of the kitchen had to be re-shot because my head shook far too much during the act of desiccating the cocoanut. I felt ashamed of some of these movements which I had unconsciously executed and I was determined to correct them as far as possible. I feel it was very judicious of Satyajit to show me the rush prints instead of pointing out my mistakes. Had he tried to do so, I might have reacted unfavourably to his comments or felt hurt. Can I characterise this as his manner of handling an actor? I remember I was both ashamed and grateful.

Pather Panchali was the first Indian film to convey a sense of realism in every frame. But this mode had its hazards too. In a kitchen shot I was all but roasted sitting and cooking in front of a burning *chula*, and constantly feeding the fire with pieces of wood. The shot was several times NG (No-good), either because the sound of the spurting oil was louder than my voice, or because a crow cawed at the wrong moment, or because the moving sun threw an unwanted shaft of light through the mango branches. Finally, I was driven to tears, I was sick of the whole affair and ran out of the kitchen flinging a few uncomplimentary remarks about 'realism'. But there was no reaction from Satyajit. The whole team waited patiently till a repentant me returned to sit on the wooden seat in front of the *chula* and do the scene all over again.

As soon as I got the message for reproducing a particular emotion, I felt free of any restriction and followed the logic of the character that I was at the moment. Not consciously though, and of course, within the frame of time and space. In the last shot of *Pather Panchali* this could have landed me in trouble for there was no time for a retake. The scene was shot in the fading light of the evening; night was descending fast. It was a silent shot. Subrata was finicky. He went on checking and re-checking the light. Satyajit became jittery. "Quick Subrata, take the shot". At long last everything was ready. The family was seated inside a cart, leaving the village for good. I was asked to bend my face on my knee once the cart was on the move. The camera started. I looked on. "Bend your face", said Satyajit. But I just looked on. I was leaving my village forever, leaving Durga forever. *And Durga is dead, dead*. "Bend your head", hissed an urgent voice. Suddenly a sob choked me and I hid my face. The shot was over. Darkness closed in. Subu (Apu) jumped out of the cart and disappeared. I called out to him in a hoarse voice. I heard Satyajit talking to Subrata. "Did you notice what happened inside the cart?" I felt rewarded.

This very logic made Sarbajaya in *Aparajito* plain sailing for me. By now the character was deeply rooted within me. No wonder then that



Satyajit Ray directing Karuna Banerjee.

acting in *Aparajito* was such a source of enjoyment. Even a simple scene like Apu's return from Calcutta on vacation had a world of significance to me as Sarbajaya and the fact that, as a mother, I had to accept two different children as one and the same did not disturb me at all. One day the shooting schedule had to be changed due to some technical hitch, and Satyajit wanted me to do an emotional scene. I was not mentally prepared for this. It was a challenge to me, doing it at that particular moment (mind you, a veteran could have done it any time), but after a while I did succeed in producing what was wanted—we had plenty of time.

After a long interval, in *Devi* (1960) I found Satyajit working at a much faster tempo. Gone were the days of long shadows before it was even four o'clock in the afternoon. I acted entirely inside the studio. I could see that Satyajit wanted quick reactions. I felt that I was a little pressed for time before I could adjust myself to the mood. By now Satyajit was an established director, skilfully handling professional actors like Chhabi Biswas. *Devi* was his sixth film. In *Devi* I got a chance to play a completely different kind of role. Harasundari, a sceptical, rather practical woman feels neglected; but she has a confident personality. Hers was a positive character, in sharp contrast to Dayamoyee, *Devi* herself.

I got back my missing sense of expanse in *Kanchanjanga*. Labanya—the role of a mother again but quite different in many ways. It was an interesting part because in her the latent personality of a dominated wife wakes up in defence of her youngest daughter and saves her from a marriage thrust upon her by the father. Pahari Sanyal played the part of Labanya's brother. Not only did I enjoy acting as Labanya (after a period of initial resistance) but I also cherish the memories of Chhabi Biswas and Pahari Sanyal and of those days in Darjeeling. Satyajit put a song in Labanya's mouth. I do not sing and had to practise hard to tally lip movement with the song. I had to carry the tape-recorder with me and go on practising. After it was all over, he grinned and said it was okay. "Why were you so frightened?" he asked.

Looking back, I can assess Satyajit as an extremely methodical and totally unruffled director. His non-interference and unobtrusiveness helped me to relax. I had the feeling that I, too, had a contribution to make to his creative effort; that generated a greater sense of responsibility and confidence. I would not be at all surprised if that was the common feeling shared by the team of technicians as well. Without our ever saying so we all experienced this feeling of harmony and co-operation; the presence of the technicians never bothered me. In *Pather Panchali* I remember one particular shot when Sarbajaya breaks down after Harihar comes back. The technicians were silent, absolutely so. It was a cloudy day, the outer wall was torn down, the ground was flooded with buckets of water. The whole atmosphere was charged with grim expectation. On the previous day I was given the situation and the mood in writing. I was mentally prepared for what I was supposed to do. I distinctly remember how that tense silence of the technicians helped me to bring out the depth of that emotion. I remember it because I felt it and it surprised me. Were they also directed to contribute to the total atmosphere? I never tried to find out if that was so.

The Karma Festival and Its Songs

Durga Bhagvet

Introduction

The *Karma* or *Karam* is a harvest festival celebrated by the aborigines and lower-caste Hindus in the region of Madhya Pradesh and in the adjoining areas to its north and east. It is both a communal¹ and a household² festival. The celebration takes place in the bright fortnight of the month of *Bhado* (August-September), during the rainy season.

The festival comprises three distinct elements: ritual, dance and songs. The ritual consists of the worship of the *Karam* or *Kadamba* tree (*Nauclea parvifolia*). The *Kadamba* tree is an indigenous Indian tree, of tremendous cultural importance. It is mentioned in the epics and the Puranas as a beautiful shady tree blossoming in the rainy season. The *Kadamba* tree plays a remarkable role in the Krishna legend. Krishna and Radha loved this tree and chose it as their meeting place. They adorned themselves with the flowers of the *Kadamba*. Since then the flower has become a symbol of love in Indian poetry and culture.

The aborigines of East Bengal and the Bhils and Pavras of Khadesh regard the *Kadamba* tree as the flag of Indra, the Lord of Heaven. It is also a symbol of the rainy season. Thus the tree is associated with youthful love and with the monsoon.

The ritual during the harvest festival includes the worship of the *Karam* tree. This is accompanied by dances of varying formations and a variety of songs. The *Karma* festival is a very complex institution and unless we analyse each of these three elements, together with their geographic and ethnic distribution, we will not be able to understand how the ritual has become modified in course of time, how the dances have been elaborated and how the songs have developed links with the festival.

Geographic and Ethnic Distribution

The *Karma* is celebrated by all the lower-caste Hindus and aborigines in the eastern areas of Madhya Pradesh, that is Mandla, Balaghat, Bilaspur, north of Raipur and in the northern half of Durg in Chhattisgarh. It is also celebrated in the Jashpur, Raigarh, and Sarangarh areas which merge with the region of the Kaimur Range. On the Chota Nagpur plateau the *Karma* festival and dances are in a flourishing state. Thus, *Karma* does not extend beyond the limits of Singbhum³ to the east, nor beyond Nagpur in the west, in the north it extends only upto Mirzapur, and southwards just to the northern parts of Durg and Raipur districts. The absence of the *Karma*

in the south-eastern parts of the Raipur district (which merge into the Muria country) and in the south-eastern corner of Durg (the Oundhi and Panabaras areas, where we find some rare specimens of concentrated Gond culture), is in itself a very significant phenomenon. The *Karma* is not known in Bastar, or in the northern region of the Godavari district. This region is strongly influenced by the Gond culture of Bastar. Geographic distribution by itself shows that the *Karma* is not a part of the indigenous Gond culture; it has been superimposed on the Gond and allied tribes through contact with tribes living in the border areas. Thus it has been influenced either by the culture of the adjoining province or through migration of tribes belonging to some prominent neighbouring group. This leads us to an inquiry into the problems of the particular tribes in Madhya Pradesh among whom details of the *Karma* festival are still preserved in an elaborate form and into their links with tribes outside the province.

The ethnic distribution of the *Karma* dances and songs within the geographic limits mentioned above—in some cases accompanied by ritual, in others without ritual—is of primary importance. The subject sheds light on some moot points regarding: 1) the origin of the *Karma* festival; 2) the tribes which are special representatives of the ancient *Karma* worshippers, both in Madhya Pradesh and in the adjoining regions; 3) the technique of the ritual, dances and songs; 4) the popularity of the *Karma* dances and songs and 5) the religious significance attached to the *Karma*, as it is observed today.

All the agriculturists from among the lower-caste Hindus of Chhattisgarh, Mandla, Balaghat and all the way up to Nagpur, dance and sing the *Karma*. The language of the *Karma* songs is always the same as that of the eastern Hindi dialects. These forms have not reached those areas where the people speak Gondi, Marathi or Telugu. In Chhattisgarh, the *Karma* is very popular among the Rawat, Kosta and Panka.

Among the tribes, the Gond dance the *Karma* with great enthusiasm. The same can be said, with even greater truth, of the Baiga, whose *Karma* songs are famous. They know a variety of *Karma* dances.⁴ It is interesting to note that all the other tribes say that they have migrated into this province from somewhere else. The Baiga and the Bhumiya are the only two tribes who maintain that they belong here, that they have never migrated. They claim to be the original inhabitants of the province. The *Karma* songs of the Ghasia are well known, and still more famous are the *Karma* songs and dances of the Majhwar of Bilaspur. The latter also preserve the ritual worship of *Karam raja* or *Karam devata* in the form of the *Karma* tree. A few of their neighbours, both Hindus and tribals, imitate them in this respect. Equally famed are the Sahis' *Karma* songs and their ritual which is identical with that of the Majhwar.

Now, the Ghasia, Majhwar and Sahis are dispersed in great numbers in the bordering areas, in the Chota Nagpur and Mirzapur districts. Besides, in regions outside of Madhya Pradesh and especially in Chota Nagpur, the Hindu agriculturists dance the *Karma* more vigorously than

the Bhuiya, Munda and Oraon (the latter have their *Jadur* and dormitory dances first, and the *Karma* dances afterwards). This has led S.C. Roy to conclude that the *Karma* festival and dances were borrowed by the Mundu tribes from the Hindus.⁵ But in Madhya Pradesh and Mirzapur, though the lower-castes among the Hindus observe the *Karma*, the inspiration is most certainly from the aborigines, from the Baiga, Majhwar, Sahis and Gond in Madhya Pradesh and from the Majhwar and Sahis in Mirzapur.

Two Legends about the Karma

There are a number of legends about the *Karma*. These point to its origin and distribution and, on careful analysis, favour an aboriginal origin both for the ritual and for the dances and songs. The first of these legends came from the Majhwar of Mirzapur.

There were seven brothers of the Majhwar tribe who lived together. The six elder ones used to go out to work, while the youngest stayed at home to cook the food. He used to get his six sisters-in-law to cook the meal and when it was ready, he would take it to his brothers in the fields. This youngest brother used to plant a branch of the *Karam* tree in the courtyard, and dance in front of it with his sisters-in-law. Now this caused a delay in the cooking of the meal. One day the other brothers came home unexpectedly and found them engaged in this dance. They tore up the tree in anger and threw it into the river. The youngest brother was enraged by this act and left his home. Everything seemed to go wrong with him, until a day came when he saw the *Karam devata* floating on the river. He tried to approach it, but a voice from the branch sternly warned him not to come anywhere near because he was a sinner. He then propitiated the godling by prayer and was directed to return home. There he found that everything which had previously gone wrong was now set right. Even the family house, which had become dilapidated and his brothers who had been reduced to poverty, were now restored to their former state. He called his brothers and told them that such misfortunes had befallen them because they had dishonoured the *Karam devata*. Since that moment the deity has been worshipped by the tribe.⁶

The story contains two important points which accord with the aboriginal rather than the Brahmanical code of conduct. These include: (1) the intimacy between the younger brother and the elder brother's wife, and (2) mixed dance. The reference to the dance is all the more interesting, because the boy was not aware of the fact that the tree round which he danced out of sheer merriment was actually the abode of a deity which enjoyed music and dance. The 'sin' referred to in the story seems to be the insult to the deity, at the moment when the tree was thrown away. This seems to be a typical instance of the aboriginal idea of guilt. It is only the offensive action in itself that counts. Its motive is of no consequence to the god. And so the *Karam devata* does not take into consideration the fact that the youngest brother did not consent to his brothers removing the tree from their courtyard. The 'sin' cannot be a young man's making merry with his sisters-in-law, for this is quite in accord with the moral

code of the aborigines in these parts, except where the Brahmanical idea of 'decency' intervenes.

Another *Karam* legend, prevalent among the Pauri Bhuiya of Orissa and recorded by S.C. Roy, says that a merchant returned home after a very prosperous voyage. His vessel was loaded with precious metals and other valuables, which he had brought from foreign lands. Before he unloaded the ship, he wanted his wife, sons and daughters to go aboard and perform a religious ceremony as a thanksgiving for his safe return. But it happened to be the *Karam puja* day and the women were dancing round the *Karam* branches and the men were beating their drums. No one paid any attention to the merchant's plea. The merchant was furious with them. He uprooted the branches of the tree and flung them away. Immediately the wrath of the *Karam* god fell on him, and his ship with its all precious cargo sank to the bottom. The man then consulted an astrologer and asked him why the ship had disappeared and how he could get it back. The astrologer told him the curse of the *Karam* god was responsible and the only way to recover his ship was to invoke the deity's blessings. The merchant again set out on a voyage, this time in search of the *Karam* deity. He found the deity in the sea; he worshipped the *Karam Raja*, and the god then enjoined him to perform the *Karam* ritual every year. His sons and daughters-in-law were expected to fast for seven days and nights and dance and sing during the *Karam* festival.⁷

This legend shows the importance of the *Karam* ritual and the evil consequences of any omission on this score. Yet this story does not offer us any clues about the origin of the ritual. The legend implies that the *Karam* festival was already in existence, but the contemptuous way in which the merchant treated the sacred branches perhaps suggests that it was not a very popular custom among his class of people. No Hindu can treat a sacred object worshipped by his community with such disrespect. It is possible that the worship of this tree was prevalent in communities which were different from the one to which the merchant belonged; it must have prevailed mostly among the lower strata of society.

A story narrated among the Brahmins of Chota Nagpur says that there were two brothers: Dharma and Karma. Dharma was rich and Karma was poor. Karma's wife once asked him to go to the rich brother's house and bring home some money. Karma went. But his brother and his wife were very rude to him. Repulsed by their behaviour, he returned home in a very sullen mood. On his way, he saw some women worshipping the *Karam* tree. The women saw how dejected he was, and they advised him to worship the *Karam* tree like they did; that would make for prosperity and happiness. He followed their advice and soon his misfortunes came to an end. He continued this practice and others followed his example.⁸

This tale, too, does not mention the origin of *Karma* but only refers to the practice. The custom did not exist among the Brahmins of the province to which he belonged, but he perhaps introduced it to the Hindu castes.

Since the number of those who belong to the Hindu castes is very large as compared to the number of the tribal people, the chances for the spread of such a custom was much greater once it was introduced among the Hindus. There was also a greater likelihood of certain modifications of the original custom. Generally once a custom is sufficiently stabilized among the majority of the population, a reverse process takes place. The aboriginal minority, from whom the custom was originally borrowed by the Hindus, comes under the growing influence of Hinduism. In turn it tends to borrow new details from its Hindu neighbours. The cross-currents of culture thus pass back and forth, silently and yet with great momentum. A process of this kind seems to have taken place in the case of the *Karma* festival, which originated among the aborigines but was borrowed from them and popularised by the Hindus.⁹

The Manner of Observing the Karma Festival

Mirzapur: The *Karam* festival is observed in Mirzapur in a very simple manner. It begins on the eleventh day of the bright half of the month of *bhado*¹⁰ and lasts for at least ten days. Men fast on that day and wear a thread on the right arm over which some crude spells are recited. Then they go into the forest and cut a branch of the *Karam* tree, which they set up in the courtyard. The men bow before it and the women decorate it with red lead. Then they get drunk, dance round it and sing *Karam* songs. The festival is an occasion for wild license and debauchery. It is understood that if any girl takes fancy to a man, she has only to kick him on the ankle during the dance and the parents get the pair married.¹¹

During the dance, men and women stand opposite each other; they advance and retreat to the music of the sacred drum.¹² The dance continues the whole night; the next morning the branch is carried in a procession by the men and immersed in a tank or a stream outside the village.¹³

Bihar and Orissa: The Oraon observe the *Karam* festival with zeal. The chief elements of the ritual include:

1. Cutting three branches of the *Karam* tree, which are called *Karam raja*.
2. Carrying the branches into the village dancing ground, accompanied by dance and music.
3. Dancing and singing throughout the night.
4. Garlanding the branches the next morning reciting the *Karam* legend.
5. Offering flowers, rice and curds to the branches.
6. Red *Karam* baskets full of grain are placed in front of the branches and some ceremonially nurtured barley seedlings are distributed among the boys and girls, who put the yellow blades in their hair.
7. The branches are lifted and carried by the women through the village and then immersed in the stream.¹⁴

Among the Hill Bhuiya, the *Karma* is observed as follows: the men plant the *Karam* tree on the altar, while the women make a continuous 'hur-hura' sound. The girls bow low before the *Karam* branch and say, 'O *Karam Raja*, O *Karam Rani*, we are making *Karam-Dharam* night.'¹⁵ It is interesting

to note that the Hill Bhuiya, unlike the Oraon and Munda, do not have any special dances for the *Karma*.

Madhya Pradesh: The Majhwar in the Madhya Pradesh dance the *Karma* dance in the *asarh* (June-July) and *kunwar* (October-November) or at the beginning of the rains. The *Gaota* or the village-headman or the Baiga priest fetches a branch of the *Karma* tree from the forest and sets it up in his yard as a notice and invitation to the village. After sunset all the people, men, women and children, assemble and dance round the tree to the accompaniment of a drum known as *mandar*. The dancing continues all night and in the morning the host picks up the branch of the *Karam* tree and consigns it to a stream, at the same time regaling the dancers with rice, pulse and goat's meat. This dance is a religious rite in honour of the *Karam raja* and is believed to keep sickness at bay and bring prosperity.¹⁶ The Bunjhar of Bilaspur perform the *Karma* ritual in the same way as the Majhwar.¹⁷ Among the Savar and Sahis of Bilaspur the same customs are observed with respect to the ritual. The Gond in the Bilaspur district and even the low-caste Hindus, like the Ahir, Kosta, Panka and Ghasia perform the *Karma* ritual in the manner mentioned above. However, the *Karma* does not form a nucleus of the indigenous Gond culture. In the south-eastern part of the province and in Bastar, where the Gond culture is found in a concentrated form, the *Karma* ritual is not observed at all. Nor is it observed in the western part of the province where the Gond are found in considerable numbers. It seems from this that though the Gond in the eastern portion of the province observe the *Karma* ritual and though the *Karma* dances and songs are so popular among them, it is an element borrowed from the local culture rather than from their tribal or Gond culture. The Baiga are adept *Karma* dancers but they do not seem to observe the ritual as do the Bunjhar with whom they have racial and cultural affinities.

Transfer of the Karma Dances and Songs to the Jawara

The *Karma* ritual in its original form, that is the worship of the *Karam* tree, is observed by the tribes of Bilaspur. In the eastern part of Madhya Pradesh, the *Karma* dances and songs are transferred to another harvest festival called the *Jawara*; it takes place in the month of *Bhado*. Seven kinds of grain are sown by men in an earthen pot and then the women dance round the pot for three nights. On the fourth day of the bright fortnight, the pot holding the *Jawara* seedlings is thrown into a stream by women. The *Jawara* festival is observed all over the province, but only in these eastern parts are the *Karma* dances and songs performed during the festival. Among the Gond the *Jawara* festival is very popular. The Ghasia, Panka, Kosta and Baiga also observe it, but the latter seems to have dropped the *Karma* ritual entirely.

It is interesting to note that this transfer of the *Karma* dance and songs to the *Jawara* is not peculiar to the tribal people of Madhya Pradesh. The Oraon also have a form of the ceremonial use of the seedlings in the *Karam* ritual. There, however, it forms a secondary part of the ritual, while in the Madhya Pradesh it constitutes its central core. This transfer

of the dance and songs of one ritual to another shows how local culture gradually absorbs and transforms customs which belong to outside areas. The popularity of the *Jawara* among the Gonds and the transfer of the *Karma* dance and songs to it once again emphasize the fact that the *Karma* is not a Gond festival and it has been imported into the land of the Gond by other tribes, such as the Majhwar, Savar and Sahis, found prominently in the adjoining territory, in Orissa as well as in the district of Mirzapur.

The Karma Dance

The *Karma* dance is more popular, and geographically more widely represented than the *Karma* ritual. Even in parts where the ritual is unknown, the *Karma* dance with all its varieties is danced in a lively fashion. In the eastern portion of the Madhya Pradesh, the *Karma* has ceased to be a seasonal dance. It is danced all the year round, on any and every important occasion, in winter and summer alike, on moonlit nights or even on nights when the darkness is made less fearful by a glow of little fires, round which the young boys and girls dance. It is the principal dance of the tribal people in these parts. The social life and the love-life of the people acquire much of its colour from these nocturnal enjoyments.

The primary significance of the *Karma* dance lies in the fact that it was meant to accompany the ritual; hence it has a religious significance. As a monsoon dance complementing the harvest ritual, it implies certain magical qualities beneficial to a good crop. Certain movements in the dance are imitative of agricultural operations. This leads one to believe that the object of the dance is primarily magical,¹⁸ though it is true that the symbolism is many a time "vague and elastic."¹⁹

In Madhya Pradesh, however, the symbolism has almost disappeared as the ritual itself is observed by a very small section of the people, chiefly by tribes like the Majhwar and Savar, who are found in greater numbers outside the province than in it. The *Karma* thus ceases, to be a "festival dance" and is looked upon as a "traditional social dance" by the majority of the people in the province.

Two Variations of the Dance

The *Karma* is a mixed dance, with varying formations and steps. Though it is not possible for us to discuss the technical peculiarities of all the known variations in detail, we shall describe some of the chief forms. The variations of the dance are distinguished by (1) either a circular or linear formation, (2) a drum accompaniment or lack of it, (3) postures, (4) steps, and (5) slow or rapid movements.

In Mirzapur: Men and women stand in opposite lines and dance the *Karma* to the accompaniment of the drum.

In Jashpur: The standard *Karam* dance with the drum is one in which "boys and girls form two curving lines on the rim of a circle, and the dance then consists of a zigzag walk to the right with the torsos erect, followed

by a zigzag walk to the left with the dancers leaning forward. In the latter movement, emphasis is on every step on the left leg, the left foot being brought down firmly with a bend of the knee, while the right leg is brought lightly back behind".²⁰ The formation of the dance is either circular or semi circular.²¹ The two variations of the dance are: (1) The *Jugia Karam*, in which "the girls form two parts of a curved line half facing the centre of the circle. The boys are strung out in a loose line holding hands, while the girls interlock their arms and stand with their bodies touching. The line then moves round the circle, the girls walking smoothly while the men proceed with leaps. After an erect zigzag progress they move backwards, and then do a figure of four movements before the walk is resumed. This consists of two steps forward, first with the right leg and then with the left. The right foot then moves up to just behind the left, and the left is then brought back to a pace behind the right." (2) The *Lujhki*, "in which the movement is to the right and there is no reverse. The action consists of two figures, each with four movements, the rhythm rising and falling round the third movement of each figure. The dance is done with the knees partly bent and goes rapidly with running swing."²²

In Chota Nagpur: In Chota Nagpur the *Karam* dance is popular among the Hindus as well as the tribal people. The Munda also dance it. The *Karam* dances of the Oraon are very popular and are called "stooping dances" as distinguished from the other tribal dances like the *Jadur* and the *Kharla* dances which are danced in erect position.²³ In all the variations of the *Karam* dance the boys and girls form separate rows. The variations of the dance are (1) *Lujhki*, in which girls adopt "a peculiar limping gait" and clap with their hands; (2) *Hutungia Karam*, a dance in which each girl clasps her neighbour to the left by passing her left arm round the latter's waist and faces her neighbour on the right; (3) *Kesari Kappa*, a dance which imitates the gathering of the *Kesari* nuts or water nuts in the tanks. In this dance the girls kneel down and the drummers (the boys) squat on the ground facing them. The girls keep shaking their heads violently, so that their hair become dishevelled. As the dance progresses, it reaches a climax when one or more girls show signs of "spirit possession". Then the knot which fastens the clothing of the girl thus possessed by the spirit becomes loose at the waist. One of the young men must kick her or pull her by the hair till she comes back to her senses. This is a very exciting dance, and affords an occasion for obscenities.²⁴

Among the Munda: The Munda have three variations of the *Karam* dance which are different from those of Oraon. They are: (1) *Lashna Karam*—This is the central *Karam* dance from which the *Khemta* and *Binsari* have evolved. It is a mixed dance "in which the dancers join hands, stoop forward, and form themselves in an arc or circles. Towards the centre of the circle they advance with graceful steps and retire backwards in the same bending posture, with the dancers all the time moving slightly towards the left so as to complete the circle". (2) *Khemta Karam*—All that we know about this dance is that the movements are slow and graceful (3) *Bensari*—It is danced from cock crow to sunrise. In it "the posture is more erect than in other *Karam* dances".²⁵

In Madhya Pradesh: The *Karma* dance is an inter-communal dance, as it is danced by the low-caste Hindus as well as the tribes. The tribal dance, however, is more lively and vigorous. Among the Kolarian tribes like the Baiga, Savar and Majhwar, the *Karma* is the principal dance. It is danced not only during the rainy season, but even in the summer and winter. The Gond in these parts also dance the *Karma*. But the small and very typical forest tribes like the Bhunjia and Kamar in the Raipur district do not dance it. Neither do the Gond in the southern part of Durg and in the Bastar tract. It is only where Hindu influence is predominant that the *Karma* songs and dances thrive. It is also obvious from the ethnic spread of the *Karma* dances that it is the non-Gond tribes mentioned above who introduced the *Karma* in the province. Later the large Gond population took it up and popularized it. This led even close observers of the tribes like Russell to believe that the *Karma* was the central dance of the Gond.³⁰ The variations of the *Karma* dance are typified by the performances of the Baiga who are adept dancers. They

1. *Khalla Karma*, which affords a very good example of circular movement. The woman advances with the left foot, brings the right up to it and swings it back and to the right; she brings the left foot back a little to the right of its original position, and bows; then she repeats the gesture. Another formation of the circular movement is thus: the left foot is brought forward across the right, then back to the left of the original position, then the right foot is brought forward and across the left, then back; this, too, is a little to the left.

2. *Tadi Karma*: This formation and the "advancing and retreating movements" are significant. In the *Tadi*, there is a quick left, right, left movement forward, then the right foot is brought to the left, touches the ground with the toes and is taken back at once. The left follows, then right, then a bow, and the steps are repeated.

3. *Lehaki Karma* which is "generally sung to the rhymed songs and has a powerful effect of emotions, is a jerky, rather suggestive movement. The women stand in line; each lifts the left leg by bending the knee a dozen times, then puts the left leg a little forward, bends the knee, brings the right foot up beside the left, puts the left leg a little forward again, bends, brings up the right foot up beside the left, puts the left forward again, bends, brings up right, and so on. Or the line may go round and round; in this case the right foot is moved first a bit to the right, the left is brought up to it, but always a little in the front. In this movement, one foot only takes the lead and the other follows and at every pace the body is jerked from the knee."

4. *Jhumar Karma*: This dance is typified by its rapid movement and is very attractive. It is described by Elwin as one "in which the feet are alternately brought forward and back, very quickly. The right shoots forward and is back in its place immediately, and the left is out and back as quickly".³⁷ It is curious to note that while in Madhya Pradesh, the *Jhumar* is taken as a variation of the *Karma*, Crooke considers *Jhumar* or *Jhuhir* to

be a dance separate from the *Karma*, but corresponding to it.³⁸ Dalton has also expressed the same opinion about the dance as it is practised by the Nagesur and Boyar tribes of Mirzapur.³⁹ The *Jhumar* in Bihar is also a separate dance and in no way connected with the rainy season dance, the *Karam*.³⁰

Karma Songs

Karam or *Karma* songs can be classified as follows:

1. Songs dedicated to *Karam Raja* in which the celebration of the ritual is glorified.³¹
2. Love-songs, in which marital as well as extra-marital love is described.³²
3. Licentious and obscene songs.
4. Songs relating to village gossip and recording events of social importance in the history of the village or the tribe. People of prominence also form a subject of the *Karma* songs. For example, king Bhavtari (Bhartrihari, the famous composer of *The Three Centuries of Verses or Shatakas* in Sanskrit and the brother of the king Vikrama of Ujjain), plays a prominent part in the *Karma* songs of the Sahis in Bilaspur.

In the Madhya Pradesh all varieties of *Karma* songs are to be found except the first, that is the glorification of the *Karam Raja*.³³

Karma Songs

(A) From the Baiga in Durg.

आपरा ओझत गोरी देखत है
जोड़ी छूत है।

1. (The fair woman pulls up the end of her sari, the *palu*.³⁴ And she throws a glance and a pair of bullets with it.)

नरियाके तोरमें जोगियाके डेरा
धमक गिरे
छोड़ देरे जोगिया डेरा तुम्हारे
धमक यहाँ गिरे
आमके द्वार कालाराम सब लोक रे लगवे।

2. (On the bank of the river the ascetic has put his camp. O ascetic! Give up your camp. *Kalaram* is going to plant a mango tree there.)

आमके सुवा डार पातर कोइली बोले
कोइली बोले पातर।

3. (On the branch of the mango tree the cuckoo bird cooes sweetly. Oh! the cuckoo cooes sweetly.)

काहेके आँगन झण्डा खेले
नेरे कचेरी हो दावा
आँगन झण्डा खेले।

4. (In whose courtyard do you play the *danda*?³⁵ In your office ground. O father, we play the *danda*.)

मुसाके चलोच पानी लाने
तेही अनजमाँ मारे तेरिमें बैवके
मुसाके कलोच पानी लाने
गौरी के चन्द्रा काल बतियारे
बैसो बैसो हमारे कल बतियारे
झिनक पहना आवे
हमारे रसिया
हमार बैठो बैठो हमार खटिया।

(5) (While she went to fetch water in a gourd pot, you were seated on a hillock and looked askance at the moon-face of the fair girl while she was fetching water, O Kalbatiya! Be seated, Kalbatiya, my darling. Be seated on my cot. All the guests have arrived. Be seated on my cot, O Kalbatiya.)

ये जिवला कहाँ लुक्कूँ गोंदली फूल
बागे भालु खाले गोंदली फूल
मैके पठावे हरामजादी तोला जानके
खटियामे देवे काकम सेनुर
तोला पठावे भेकामें।

(6) (Where shall I hide myself, O *Gondali*³⁶ flower? Let tigers and foxes feast on my body. O *Gondali* flower, I shall send you back to your father's house, having found out your tricks).

ओहिले लेजावे मान्दुरी बजैया
मोर अचरा मत छिवे
मोर अचरा में महुँर मीरा
छिवत छिवत परान जाही।

(7) (Take this away, O drummer! But do not touch my breast-covering. Underneath my breast-covering are beautiful sweets. If you touch my cloth, it will kill me; so take the sweets away, O drummer.)

हँसीके ख्याल मत करो बाबु लैक
असरी बैठे सास ससुर बैठे खटियामें
बाबु हँसीके ख्याल मत करो बाबु।

(8) Do not joke, my boy, do not joke. My mother-in-law sits on the verandah, my father-in-law squats on a cot, do not joke.)

ऊँच टेकरिया मजुर तेरी देवायरे
शिकारिके जाली में जीव जाही तौररे।

(9) (On a high hill you are screaming loudly, O peacock. Your life shall be installed in the bag of the hunter. On a high hill you are screaming.)

ऊँचे टेकरिमें लोक चार बैठे रे
ऊँचे खाटू बैठे केवटिन कलारिन रे
किया मंद पोते कलार

किया मंद पिया जवान
बुढ़े मतवार
जवान फुल्ली मत पिये
बुढ़े मतवार पिये
खटिया सोवादे बुढ़े मतवार
पलङ्ग सुवादे जवानला।

(10) (On a high hill four men are sitting, in a high village. The fisherwoman and wine merchant's wife are sitting; the wine merchant has distilled the liquor himself. The wine was made, the youth drank it, and yet the old man got intoxicated. O young man! Do not drink *Phulli* wine. Let the intoxicated old man drink it. Let the old man sleep on a cot. Let the young man sleep on a bedstead.)

मान्दर बजैयाके सुन्दर सरीरा
चोलाल घूँ काथे जाने कबीला
कियावे सुनावे यहाँ बजारमें
यारला सुनाव
हाथे हाथे नवा थैली जहोली हो
हैसे में राजा बदन मबली।

(11) (The drummer has a beautiful body. Kabir knows that the body is subject to decay. Where does she inform her lover? In the bazar does she inform her lover? The lover with a money-bag in his hand? She tells him: O king! How is it possible? I am in an impure condition.)

लौके माटी भिवा छाप लेवे
तई लो बनवा गादी बिना
लोहाके केसरी गँगरुवा के चारा।

(12) (Bring mud, smear the ground. You are in the habit of sleeping without a mattress.)

नवा मान्दरमें घुंगरु लगे
चार भाई चौकिदार पहारा लगे।

(13) (The new drum has a string of bells. Four brothers are keeping a vigilant watch.)

बह्यर कचेलिमें लिप लेचे चुना
आगे रसियाके मत करे गुन्हा।

(14) (The office at Bahyar, whitewash it properly. Do not make a mistake when the lover is watching you.)

भाटाके बाहिराला फोर फोर खावे
रामगढ़े किलाला देरवाला जावे।

(15) (The seeds of *brinjals* are broken and eaten. We go to the fort of Ramgarh.)

बीचे समुन्दर कुमड़ी गवेह आया
मत जाना मच्छरियाँ किला।

(16) (In the sea they have spread a net. Do not go into the stronghold of the fish.)

करिया फतोही दोदरी गुदाम
मैं कैसे मानूँ बहिन दामाद।

(17) (Black is your jacket, with a double row of studs. How can I resist you, O my sister's husband?)

नन्दियाके काँटी काँटी कोदे बोलाय लें
घरके तिरिया मई नवावे।

(18) (On the bank of the river, *Kodan*³⁸ is sown. A man is put to shame by his wife.)

एकड़न रुखवाला जान कँदैया
अमली के जवार होते लोढाला पानी देते
मोर चोला मस्त है पियास।

(19) (A man knows only how to cut a tree. Yet another, a friend, gives it water from a pot. Oh, I am dying of thirst.)

पाँवमें चले पवन गाड़ी
कुँवामें लेव डोरी नहीं बुड़ाव
मैं चला ले तो मोटारगाड़ी।

(20) (The bicycle is run by feet. Even if I am taken to the well, I shall throw a rope into it, but water I shall not draw, until I am taken for a drive, in a motorcar.)

खैरागढमें बिजोली चमके रे
हाथे घरे गोली सूरी तरवार
घोड़ा उपर रखे बघला सरदार।

(21) (The lightning flashes in Khairagarh, the Bagela sardar, mounted on horse, holds a gun in one hand and a sword in another.)

छिपि चयिला छान छाये
बालक राजा जिलो जिलो है
सावन भादो काँसि फूले
डोंगरीके सूत कुँटे
जेरी पिरित नहीं छूटे।

(22) (The seed is covered well with its coat, my king; the baby is rocking well in the cradle. The *Kasi* flowers bloom, in the months of *savan* and *bhado*. When the yarns of hemp are pounded, love once realized never breaks off.)

आँधोरी करारमें छेक लेवे फाँदा
पिछुले के फाँदामें फाँदी गया मरुूर
आगुके फाँद गया रजनिया।

(23) (Keep the net ready on the dark night. The peacock is caught in the net behind. Rajaniya, the lover is caught in the first.)

ऐसा सोहाग फूल आँगन लगाया
मैं नु का जान भाई रे
पेड़ देखा छिदिर बिदिर

पान देखा छिदराही
फूल बरनाही।

(24) (Such a beautiful flower³⁹ has bloomed in the courtyard. How can I know about it, O brother? When I saw the tree, it was spread, I saw the leaves and they were huge; the bud, too, I saw, and it has not bloomed. How can I know about it, O brother?)

वारी जो आपन पन्देमी माई
चिरिया जो होथे धुरके पढ़ाते
तिरिया बरस नहीं पाये।

(25) (The stranger wants to bestow knowledge upon us. If it is a bird, you can catch it and coach it. But when it is a woman, she won't pick up knowledge.)

(B) From the Gond of Raipur

लहर बहर आये कर्मी नाचुके
कर्मी कर्मी छोड़के बेवदे
धुर नकटा पैले जा
सनधरी खड़े रा।

(1) (With a gusto have you come to dance *Karma*. You have to give up mischief and stand quietly by the wall.)

लडका : लाल भाजी नसर फसर
हरदी नगरगढ़के
अरे वाग हूरी
तोर देरवाला सुरित वाग दियाला

(2) (Boy: The red vegetable is no good, in the turmeric the ploughshare is stuck. O blooming girl, light the lamp, so I may see your beauty.)

लडकी : अरे तोर घर गये हो
आगी मैगाये
चूर चल करे सारी रानी
चले अरे डोका
बने लगे सारी कुग्यामे

(3) (Girl: Oh! They have gone to your house to bring fire. Let it be burning the whole night. Go back, O man, to the hut, where you fitted so well.)

(C) From the Gond and Hindus of Bilaspur

हिचे जावे हमोल बुलावे
सानोकील नहीं जानूँ
हाथमें बुलावे
कोन होरा मोरा घरे
कोन हारा विमार
कोन हारा इवरा बटावे
सानुकी नी जानूँ हाथमें बुलावे।

(1) (You be gone! Why are you calling me? I do not understand such things at all. Why beckon me by hand? Who will hold my basket? Who will hold the fish-net? Who will show the pond? I do not understand such things at all.)

कारी आचार पेड़
कहाले लाने पोथी पुरान
कारी आचार पढ़े
चुरीले लाने पोथी पुरान
कोरवल लानेला किताब।

(2) (He reads black letters. From where have you brought scriptures? From Chhuri have I brought it; the Kotwal has brought only one book. And reads black letters.)

तनन बिगड़े बातके तनन
तुम फरे लामी लामी
मकन फरे चाकी
कमरमें दम नहीं
कैसे मारे आँखी राजा तनन
बिगड़े बातके तनन
दरस लागे चोड़ा पहाड़में
रान्धेला झुनगा साग
दोनो दोनो झोर
चोड़ा पहारला पथरा गिरे
दुनियाले सोर दरस लागे
कल कल देवी करे
मर मर स्वप्नमें जोरे
ऐन्ति मारे पैन्ति मारे
भाग भाग कर रे दोनामसाल
राजा हवे बाजा बाजे।

(3) (The fun of all talk is gone. You wander far and wide. Even in the house the cart moves on. As there is no strength in the waist⁴⁰ And yet you wink at me, O king! The fun of all talk is gone. You are seen in the Chanda Pahad. Drum-stick vegetable is cooked. Eat it dish after dish; from the Chanda mountain falls a rock. And the world sees a sun now. The deities (birds) make *Kalkal* noise in the crevices. Stones are thrown this way and that. Run away, O witch, to the cemetery! O king, now the trumpet sounds.)

(D) From the Majhwar of Bilaspur

नाने दुलारा साहेब गिना गिहे थोरा
बाँधके खोके खिसा
और लपेटा
बाहमें चन्दन छिटका
छातिमें रोरा
चढ़े गोमनाती घाट
फिर कटघोरा
लेन देन नहीं बनिस
प्रेम रसक थोरा।

(1) (The small darling youth is considered a big person. He ties a beautiful turban and also a cloth on it. On his arms are marks of sandalwood. On

his chest, beads. He climbs the *ghat* of *Gomnati* and wanders in *Katghora*. He could neither give nor take sufficiently. As there are few who appreciate love.)

साम कहाथे नवा बहोरिया
पहरिन लाल धरिया
वेष्टेके भात परोसिया
कंचनके थारिया
औरव भेंगे करी कोइला
मूरव भेंगे करिया
कहाँके चूरी चाकी

कहाँके बनोरिया
कहाँके नयनकाजल
पहरिले बहोरिया
चोपाके चूरी चाकी
कटघोराके नयनकाजल
पहरिले बहोरिया।

(2) (Says the mother-in-law: The daughter-in-law wore a red *sari* and served rice, slowly, slowly, in the dish of gold. Her eyes were red, her face became dark. Where are the bangles? Where are the armlets? Where is the collyrium for eyes?)

गोरी रोवे सावन महिना
कारवर छुटथे मिलनुवा
थैलतो चुटे वारो रे बिहोवा
गोरीके छुटथे मिलनुवा।

(3) (The fair woman weeps in the month of *saavan*. Who can escape a co-wife? The man has left his wife, but the fair woman cannot escape a co-wife. And she weeps.)

(E) From the Dhanahar of Bilaspur

राजे केरतरि हो
खोचे कलंदर फूल
तेली घरी तेल मँगावे
बामन घरले धीवें
चले पीतमपूर
भाई केरतरि रे।

(1) (The flower of *Kalinder* shines near the plantain tree. Ask for oil in the Teli's house, ask for ghee in the Brahmin's house. Come to Pitampur underneath the plantain tree.)

पानी आला कैसा जाऊँ
आपटि परे सिधा घघोरि गिर गये
गघरीके ओवरन गुघरी
नारिक ओवरन मैथ्यरमें
दुरवे रोवे समुराय
हापथि फेरे
सिरधि घेला रे।

(2) (Showers have come. How shall I go? The showers beat in the head. The water-pot falls down. A dung-heap is the shelter for a she-ass, and the mother's house for a woman. She weeps with pain, in the house of the father-in-law.)

कोडारी कोडारी माटी ए फेखथेरे
केकरा हर खोजे आपन चेचरिला
पढ़ना खोजे मँजधार

कोतरि हर खोजे आपन झोरकिला
मगर चले थे वरात
माटी ए फेखथे रे।

(3) (With an axe the earth is dug. The crab is searching for its hole, the big fish searches for a deep current, the small fish for a ditch. The crocodile walks majestically, and dust is thrown up.)

(F) From the Sahis in Bilaspur

नाम ललिकार राजा भर्तरी
जे दिन लेहस जनम
बाजे तबला निसान
हरी हरी गोबर मँगायके
छे खुँटी आँगन लिपाय
तमें कलस मदाय
रूपे दीपन जलाय
कासीले पण्डित बुलाके
गाये मँगला चार
अलती कलती करमा नाचथ हैं
मुँह करके किश आन ।

(1) (The king of the Bhartari line by name Lalikar, the day he was born, drums were beaten as announcement; fresh green cowdung was brought; with it the ground was cleaned; with six pegs was it marked. In it a water-jar was kept; a silver lamp was also kept burning. From Kashi, pundits were called. They sang auspicious songs. The ordinary folk danced the *Karma*. The farmers' faces lit with joy. Such was the king Bhartari by name Lalikar.)

राजा भर्तरी नाम ललिकार
फुदकी फुदकी मिरगा नाच थे
राजा खेलैला सिक्कर
एके दचिना राजा मार थे
ते खर सनमुख घाव
घरती लोभावन मिरगा गिरथे
उठके करथे जवाब
खुरेला दे दे गौ लछमिला

घर घर लेही पुजाय
सिंगेला लेही दे दे कोई छती
राममें झूजी सरी जाय
खडलिला दे दे कोई साधुला
बनमें करही बिचार
नैनाला दे दे चतुर नारिला
जगमें होही सहा ।

(2) (The king of Bhartari line by name Lalikar went out hunting. A deer was playing; it was romping about. The king shot in a moment, he shot an arrow in its direction. The beautiful deer fell to the ground. It got up for a while and said: Give my hoofs to the glorious cow, so they will be worshipped in every house. Give my horns to a warrior so that he will fight in battle and die. Give my hide to a sage, so that he will (sit on it) and contemplate. Give my eyes to a wise woman so she will be praised in the world.)

पाली बजार गये लुगरा के मोल करे
लेवत लेवत मौजत बाद पोर
हाथाला देख रहे हरदी बजारके कोसम तरी।

(3) (She went to Pall Bazar to buy a *sari*, while making the bargain she stopped looking at the man's hand. Near the *Kosam* tree. In the Hardi bazar.)

कनकीके पेज राँधू मैनाकी सिकार
आइ दूरी लुहुक लुहुक भागे रे बिचार
अमरैया जावो एके सिटिमके
अमरैया जावो रे

(4) (Shall I make gruel of wheat flour? Or shall I cook the *maina* bird? Surely this girl is in want. Wear, O daughter-in-law, bangles from Chapa, armlets from Chhuri, collyrium from Katghora. Wear them, O daughter-in-law.)

Summary

The *Karma* is not an indigenous part of the Gond culture, but seems to be the product of the Kolarian or Munda culture. In Madhya Pradesh, the Baiga, Majhwar and Saver are the people who chiefly practise the *Karma*, and the rest of the tribes have copied them. The *Karma* ritual is observed by Bilaspur tribes alone; in the rest of the eastern part of the province, the *Karma* dances and songs have been amalgamated with the ritual of the *Jawara* festival. It is very popular among the Gond and the Hindus all over the province. The *Karma* or *Kadamba* tree thus recedes into the background in the land of the Gond. There is only one solitary instance known to us (cited by Hislop) where the *Karma* or *Mundi* wood is used by the Gond to make *Nurma Pan* (a god in the Gond pantheon) in Chhindwara. There is no other instance in the Gond religion where the *Karma* tree is looked upon as sacred. The *Karma* dance, also owing to the deterioration of the ritual in the province, exists only as a social traditional dance of the rainy season, and we find people dancing the *Karma* even in summer and winter.

A study of the various forms of the dance in Madhya Pradesh and in the adjoining regions reveals that most of the movements of the *Karma* are circular. The steps are varied according to the technique of the performance. A contrast that strikes one between the *Karma* ritual and the dance in this province is that the ritual has undergone contraction while the dances have expanded. The original *Karma* ritual has been very much curtailed and the dances have been transferred to the *Jawara*. The dances, however, have spread over a wide area, and include even the *Jhumar*. The songs drop the rituals basis and are employed in the dances, depending on the emotions the dance is supposed to express. For example, the *Lahaki* is expressive of rich emotions. The chief theme of the songs is licentious, sexual love. Other subjects include gossip, natural beauty, hero-worship and satire. These songs flourish in the area. In short, the *Karma* is one of the most complicated festivals of the tribal people in the Madhya Pradesh. The ritual, the dance, and the songs are each of a complex nature and cannot be explained until we study them as they are practised by the tribes of the neighbouring provinces.

Notes and References

¹ Among the Bhuiya, Ghesia, Musahar, etc., in Mirzapur. W. Crooke, *Tribes and Castes of N. W. P. and Oudh, Calcutta*, 1896, II, pp 71-83.

- 2 Among the Majhwar in Mirzapur and the Saver in the same district. Crooke, *op. cit.*, also II, pp. 94-97; Roy, *The Kherias*, Ranchi, 1937, II, pp. 342 ff.
- 3 E.T. Dalton, *The Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal*, Calcutta, 1872, pp. 131, 135, 198.
- 4 V. Elwin, *The Beiga*, London, 1939, pp. 432 ff.
- 5 S.C. Roy, *The Mundas and their Country*, Calcutta, 1912, p. 478.
- 6 D.L. Drake-Brockmans, *The District Gazetteers of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh: Mirzapur*, XXVII, Allahabad, 1911 pp. 103-104.
- 7 Roy, *The Hill Bhuiyas of Orissa*, Calcutta, 1935, pp. 367-369.
- 8 Dalton, *op. cit.*, pp. 259-260.
- 9 W. Crooke, *op. cit.*, Calcutta, 1896, III, pp. 439 ff.
- 10 It can also begin on the fourteenth day, called *Anantchaudas*, Crooke, *op. cit.*, II, p. 83; III p. 439.
- 11 Crooke, *op. cit.*, II, p. 83.
- 12 *op. cit.*, II, p. 439.
- 13 *op. cit.*, II, pp. 94-97.
- 14 Roy, *Oraon Religion and Customs*, Ranchi, 1928, pp. 240-247, W. Archer, *The Blue Grove*, London, 1940, p. 413.
- 15 Roy, *The Hill Bhuiyas*, p. 240.
- 16 R. V. Russell and Hiralal, *Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces*, London, 1916, IV, p. 153.
- 17 Russell and Hiralal, *op. cit.*, II, p. 335.
- 18 Roy, *The Oraons*, pp. 275-276.
- 19 Archer, *op. cit.*, p. 24.
- 20 *Ibid*, p. 204.
- 21 *Ibid*, p. 21.
- 22 *Ibid*, p. 202.
- 23 Roy, *The Oraons*, p. 294.
- 24 *Ibid*, pp. 294-295.
- 25 Roy, *The Mundas*, p. 478.
- 26 Russell and Hiralal, *op. cit.*, III, p. 136.
- 27 Elwin, *op. cit.*, pp. 432-435.
- 28 Crooke, *op. cit.*, III, p. 439.
- 29 Dalton, *op. cit.*, pp. 131, 135.
- 30 Roy, *The Oraons*, p. 299; Archer, *op. cit.*, p. 20.
- 31 Archer, *op. cit.*, pp. 44 ff.
- 32 Elwin, *op. cit.*, pp. 444 ff., S. Hiwale and V. Elwin, *The Songs of the Forest*, pp. 51, 55, 61, etc.
- 33 Archer, *op. cit.*, p. 49; Crooke, *op. cit.*, p. 83.
- 34 *Palle* of the sari that covers a woman's breast.
- 35 Stick-dance.
- 36 *Gondali* flower is the marigold flower. Lovers address their sweethearts using the name of some flower.
- 37 Saint Kabir, the famous Hindi poet.
- 38 A species of small millet.
- 39 This suggests pregnancy and childbirth. The woman sees the plant, that is her husband and herself, and its leaves, namely the relatives. The bud is the enlarged abdomen, the flower is the baby.
- 40 Viz. impotence.
- 41 The reference to king Bhartrihari is amazing. He is the famous king and sage, composer of *The Three Centuries of Verses*, on love, on good conduct, and on asceticism. Like Vikrama, he is popular among the lower classes in these regions. The ideology of the two songs is typically Hindu. The poetry in them is finely developed and the theme of the second song is superb. These songs are also sung during the pig-sacrifice.

Odissi Dance

Text by Sunil Kothari

Pictures by Subodhchandra

The antiquity of Odissi dance has been traced to an early sculptural representation in the Ranigumpha and Udaygiri caves in Orissa. Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy, ascribing the representation to the second century B.C., interprets it as a scene in a *Natyashala* or dance-hall. These dance-scenes are "perhaps the earliest consciously sculptured scenes of dance and music. They are perhaps court scenes; if they are identified as scenes connected with King Udayana, a view held by some scholars, they are the first examples of theatre where full orchestration along with dancers and actors is seen. A frieze on the lower verandaha of the Queen's Palace contains a group of musicians and a dancer The whole figure thus anticipates a stylisation and is the first example of a dance which is classical in character. There are many other friezes in these caves, which speak of the great fluidity of movement which the artist was able to capture ..."

The Hathigumpha inscription of Kharavela, the Jain monarch, dating back to the second century B.C. mentions that in the third year of his reign Kharavela, himself an expert dancer and musician, arranged a performance of *Tandava* and *Abhinaya* for the delectation of his people

Scene in a *Natyashala* in the *Ranigumpha* and *Udaygiri* caves



It cannot be categorically stated that the stylisation mentioned in connection with the representation in the Ranigumpha and Udaygiri caves compares in any way with what has come to be accepted in the last two decades as the Odissi dance style. We do not have any exact guidelines to identify these examples as evidence of this style. However, taking into account the large amount of sculptures, inscriptions, palm-leaf manuscripts, the tradition of dance-ritual extending for an unbroken period of approximately nine hundred years in the various temples in Orissa and executed by the Devadasis-Maharis and Gotipua boy-dancers dressed as girls, the Odissi dance style has been now accepted as a major form of classical Indian dance.

The dance tradition in Orissa is, like in other regions of India, closely linked with religious movements. The Jains, the Buddhists, the Hindus all recognised ritual as an inevitable aspect of their worship and dance remained an integral part of the ritual. Various religious trends developed in Orissa from the second century B.C. to the thirteenth century A. D., and different dynasties and rulers gave their support to dance as part of the ritual in the temples. This fact is corroborated by the vast number of dance sculptures in Orissan temples.

The countless dance sculptures from the seventh century A. D. onwards speak of a highly evolved technique of a definite style of dance. From among the various temples, the Parsurameshwara (eighth century A. D.) contains exquisite panels of dancers. The well-known art historian, Percy Brown, describes them as excelling even the work in that famous Florentine sculptor Della Robbia's glazed terracottas. On either side of the doorway of the Jagamohana are latticed windows which carry grilles containing grouped figures of musicians and dancers. The Parsurameshwara temple also has the dance sculptures of Lord Shiva and of a dancer in a pose known in technical parlance as *chowka*, the basic stance found in Odissi dance.

The Bhuvaneshwara school of architecture which flourished during the eighth and ninth centuries A.D. has two important temples in the Vaital Deul and the Sishireshwara Deul. The Sishireshwara is considered by authorities to be the richest art monument in Bhuvaneshwara and the Vaital Deul the most aesthetically satisfying. Both the temples carry Nataraja sculptures on the uppermost part of their facades. The dancing images of Shiva inspired many of the later Nataraja sculptures. There are also a few rare dancing images of Parvati and Ganesha. In the famed Mukteshwara temple the ceiling of Jagamohana has one panel of the dancing Ganesha. A panel carved on the Rajarani temple (tenth century A. D.) shows the goddess Parvati in vigorous dance with her scarf flying and her hands and feet in rhythmic and rapid movement.

The towering Lingaraja temple in Bhuvaneshwara has arresting sculptures of *Nayikas* in various amorous attitudes. As a matter of fact, Bhuvaneshwara is a city of temples. These were built between 800 A. D. and 1300 A.D. Temples like the Mukteshwara, the Kedar Gouri, the Lingaraja, the Ananta Vasudeva, the Rajarani, the Brahmeshwara, the Chitrekarni are also of special importance for a systematic study of the

subject. Of course, the "grandest achievement of the Eastern school of architecture" is personified in the Konaraka temple built about 1250 A. D. by the great Ganga King Narsimha I in honour of Surya Deva—the Sun God.

The construction of the main Jagannath temple at Puri was completed in 1189 A. D. by Anangabhimha Deva. He also added the *Nata-mandapa* or the dancing hall to the temple for a specific purpose. This was where the dance by the Maharis-Devadasis took place as a part of the ritual. The *nata-mandapas* form a unique feature of the temple architecture of Orissa. Outstanding among such halls is the Konaraka *nata-mandapa*, beautifully conceived as a monument to the art of dancing. Several kings of different dynasties took pride in constructing them. It is recorded that Chodaganga Deva, who was considered to be a connoisseur of dance and music and who preceded Anangabhimha Deva, employed the Maharis in the Jagannath temple. This historical fact is a pointer that dance was part of temple ritual in Orissa from the twelfth century A. D.

The Konaraka *nata-mandapa* (thirteenth century A. D.) has one unique feature: it is separated from the main temple. Konaraka has been variously and justifiably described as a magnificent conception of a temple in the shape of the flying chariot of the Sun God. The *nata-mandapa* has on its walls a fascinating variety of dance sculptures which constitute a veritable lexicon of the Odissi dance. A detailed study of the different body-bends, hand-gestures, positions of the feet have proved the authenticity of the style of dancing that prevailed at that time. It has been handed down to the present-day gurus by a living tradition of performers who practised it and passed it on to succeeding generations in the family.

In Orissa the tradition of consecrating dancing girls called the Maharis goes back to the tenth century A. D. An inscription from the Brahmeshwara temple refers to Queen Mother Kolavati who erected the temple and arranged for the offering of Devadasis for the services.² A commemorative inscription of the Megheshwara temple, now attached to the Ananta Vasudeva temple, testifies to the appointment of the dancing girls. The language of the inscription is poetic.³

The temple of Jagannath at Puri began to grow as a great religious institution. A new cultural pattern developed around it in the eleventh century A. D. Odissi found a permanent place in the form of the ritual service performed by the Maharis. The succeeding dynasties and the kings made sure that the ritual and the religious services were performed with regularity. In this manner they contributed towards supporting the institution of the Maharis, who have played such an important role in the Odissi dance.

The daily chronicle known as *Madia Panji* maintained to this day at the Jagannath temple at Puri records the ritual performed by the Maharis.⁴ There are descriptive passages in the *Skanda Purana* and *Vamadeva Samhita* (tenth and eleventh century A. D.) which more or less correspond with the details of the ritual performed in the temple at Puri. As a matter of fact, the practice of dance performance was discontinued only two decades ago.

It was during the eleventh century A. D. that the poet Jayadeva wrote his immortal Sanskrit classic *Geeta Govinda*. It is a poetic idyll describing the love of Radha and Krishna. Each canto of this Sanskrit composition has a designated musical mode (*raga*) and time measure (*tala*) appropriate to the dramatic theme. King Anangabhimha Deva was so moved by the poem that he introduced the *Ashtapadis* from it to be sung and danced in the temple. In this way the text of *Geeta Govinda* became the content of the interpretative and expressional dance aspect (*abhinaya*) of the Odissi repertoire.

The Maharis were allotted specific duties. It was during the reign of Kapilendra Deva of the Solar Dynasty that the Maharis were ordered to perform twice a day at the temple: once at the time of *Bhoga-Sakala-Dhupa* (the Lord's mid-day meal) when the Mahari danced in the dance hall and at the time of *Sanja-Dhupa* (the Lord's evening meal) before *Barha Singer* or before the Lord was put to bed. A different set of Maharis danced in the sanctum sanctorum.⁵ The *Geeta Govinda* found great favour with dancers and devotees and attained prominence in the times of Prataparudra Deva, the grandson of Kapilendra Deva. The Maharis used to dance on several occasions but the tradition remained alive in the form of some sort of dance on the occasion of *Chandana Jatra* and the *Jhoolan Jatra*. On these occasions perhaps the devotees also performed, the ritual and the dance.

Another tradition of dancers called Gotipuas were the vogue at the time of Ramananda Ray, the Vaishnavite minister of Prataparudra Deva. The period was to the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century A. D. According to this tradition these boys were dressed as girls and they used to perform outside the temple, and also on the two festive occasions mentioned before. It appears that Ramananda was strongly influenced by Saint Chaitanya, who preached *Sakhi Bhava* (offering one's self to Krishna as a female attendant). King Ramachandra Deva was himself a great devotee of Lord Jagannath and he personally supervised the ritual at the temple. He regulated the ritual of the *Sebayatas*, the class of priests who performed *seva* in the temple. He built seven streets for these *Sebayatas*. There were several categories of these streets, and one of these was that of the Gotipuas.

The King's interest in physical culture led to the establishment of gymnasia in several parts of the town. These *Akhadas* were like clubs and became the centre of cultural activities. Several Gotipua artistes were attached to each *Akhada* and hence the name *Akhada Pila* was employed for the Gotipua dancers. To this day there is a continuous tradition of *Akhada Pilas* belonging to professional Gotipua troupes. Generally such a group is supervised by a particular guru. The boys are accorded training from the tender age of seven till the advent of adolescence when they start losing their delicate looks. After the eighteenth year the Gotipua dancer stops performing and becomes a conductor or a teacher and follows the footsteps of his guru. As long as they are supple, the young boys are taught various body-bends and acrobatic feats. The training is rounded off with music, singing and the playing of the drums.



Line drawings in palm-leaf manuscripts of Abhinaya Chandrika by Maheshwara Mahapatra (17th century)

It would be pertinent to mention the *Bandha-Nritya* aspect of Odissi dance in this context. Some Gotipua dancers still perform difficult acrobatic feats and twist and turn their bodies into various forms. Such items are only performed on rare occasions. References to *Bandha-Nritya* are found in *Abhinaya Chandrika* written by Maheshwara Mahapatra in the seventeenth century A.D.

The past three hundred years have witnessed great changes in Orissa, particularly on account of the several invasions by the Moghuls, the Marathas and the final conquest by the British. As a result of the political instability in the region the traditions of the Maharis and the Gotipuas suffered. Royal patronage was on the wane during these difficult times. The decadent *Sakhi Nach* of the southern districts of Orissa influenced the Gotipua dancers and their art became sensuous and vulgar. But the zamindars maintained the Gotipua dancers for general entertainment and to provide dance recitals during marriage celebrations and other festivities.

In the thirties of this century the theatre movement in Orissa was strongly influenced by trends in Western drama. Several rival *Raas Parties* (who employed Gotipua dancers and performed a melange of opera, drama and dance) managed to keep the tradition of dance alive. As has been mentioned earlier on, it was the Gotipuas who brought dance outside the temple precincts and who performed in the open. The dance performed by the Maharis was within the walls of a temple and it was witnessed only by a few privileged spectators on special occasions and during festivals. The present-day gurus of Odissi dance belong to the Gotipua tradition and it is through their endeavours that the Odissi style of dance has found a new lease of life.

The discovery of several palm-leaf manuscripts with Sanskrit text but in Oriya script sheds considerable light on the technique of Odissi dance. These manuscripts provide vital and relevant information about the *Shastras*, the codification of dance proper. The *Abhinaya Chandrika* composed by Maheshwara Mahapatra in the seventeenth century A.D. has many points in common with Nandikeshwara's *Abhinaya Darpana* and Bharata's *Natya Shastra*.

Some of these manuscripts carry line drawings as illustrations for the text and dance. Apart from their pictorial value, these illustrations serve one very useful purpose. The technique of Odissi dance is explained with the help of these line drawings. The technique meets all the four requirements of a classical style. The *Sattvika*, the *Aharya*, the *Angika* and the *Vachika* aspects are all found in this style, in accordance with the precepts of the *shastras*. Some of the manuscripts record in detail the *Hastas*—the hand gestures employed during the dance; some refer to the poses and some elaborate the theory of *nada* (sound) and *raga* (melody). But considerable work beyond cataloguing has to be done in this field. Besides *Abhinaya Chandrika* the other texts of importance are *Natyamanorama*, *Sangeetanarayana*, *Sangeetamuktavali*, *Abhinayadarapanapraksha*, *Sangeeta-kaumudi* and *Sangeetakalpalata*.

The quintessence of Odissi as a dance form is its sculpturesque quality. No other classical dance form has such close resemblance to sculpture. The *tribhanga* three body-bend aspect of sculpture has been exploited to the maximum in this dance form. The six *Pada-Bhedas* (the basic positions of the feet), the five basic *Bhumis* (the manner of moving while performing the dance), the *Bhangis* (the basic postures with relevant movements), the *Karanas* (basic dance units consisting of a stance, pose, hand gestures and movement), the *Hasta-viniyogas* (the use of the hand gestures) indicate that this dance style is classical in all its aspects.

Line drawings in palm-leaf manuscripts of Abhinaya Chandrika by Maheshwara Mahapatra (17th century).



The Odissi dance style, like all other classical Indian dance styles, has two broad divisions: *Nritta* (pure dance) and *Nritya* (the expressional dance). We have no exact knowledge about the *Natya* (the dramatic) element in this style; but it is possible to use the technique for the dramatic aspects of this dance. The dance style has been revived mainly in the form of a solo dance, though attempts have been made to use the technique for dance-dramas and ballet sequences.

The repertoire, as it was presented in the temple, is conceived as one long item, beginning with an invocation and ending with a climax of pure rhythmic dance. The order is more or less as follows with slight variations: *Bhumi Pranama* (obeisance to Goddess Earth), *Bighnaraja Puja* (an expressional piece offering prayer in praise of Lord Ganapati), pieces in praise of other deities also, *Batu Nritya* (dance offering in honour of Lord Batuka Bhairava), *Swara Pallavi Nritta* (item of pure dance set to the *swaras* and *bol*s of the *pakhawaj*), *Abhinaya* (expressional dance) to the text of the songs and *Mokhya*, a fast-paced rhythmic dance which concludes the programme.

Odissi dance makes use of several body-bends and it is in this aspect that it differs strikingly from other schools of Indian dance. In the plastic variations of its different poses one notices the similarity with the sculptural representations. Odissi has rightly been described as mobile sculpture. With the head tilted on the left, with the left hip deflected and with the flexion of the right foot resting on the toe, the *tribhanga* pose brings to this dance form a sensuous and a rhythmic quality. The movements of the torso, retaining the manner of sculpture and broken into different units—the torso, hips, legs, hands—are a distinct feature of Odissi's use of the human form. The geometric patterns of rectangles, squares, circles, while they cover the space, create myriads of fascinating visuals. The movement on the heel is another remarkable characteristic peculiar to Odissi. (It is also found in the Kuchipudi style of the neighbouring state of Andhra Pradesh). No wonder, dance as illustration must have supplied inner rhythms to the sculptors and the architects who constructed the temples.

For *Abhinaya* (expressional dance), the *Ashtapadis* from *Geeta Govinda* and the Oriya compositions of the three poets, Kavisurya Baladeva Rath, Gopalkrishnan and Banamali are usually chosen and these are greatly favoured by the gurus. Their appeal lies in their poetic content. Because of this bias in favour of the *Geeta Govinda* and the poems of these three poets, the depiction in expressional dance consists of *Nayika-bhedas*—the various states of mental agony and ecstasy of the *Nayika*, depending upon the separation and union with her beloved *Nayak*. The songs are in Sanskrit and Oriya. Of late songs from Hindi, Brijabhasha and Avadhi have been used for new compositions.

The music is soft, lilting and melodious, employing the North Indian classical Hindustani style; it is also influenced by Karnatic music. A pair of small cymbals, a *Pakhawaj*, a flute or violin are the instruments used. The lyrics set to a particular *raga* and *tala* are sung by the vocalist and the dancer mimes them at the time of *Abhinaya*.



Radha



addresses Krishna,



O, Krishna



draw a flower



"O, son of Yadu,



*with your fingers more cool than
sandal paste*



in musk



upon



will you



on my breasts,



(breasts) held aloft



which are Cupid's

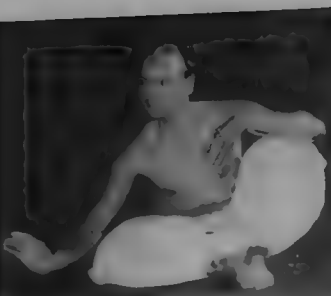


*कुरु यदुनन्दन चन्दनशिरतरेण करेण पयोधरे ।
on my breasts,*



*मृगमदपत्रकमत्र मनोभवमङ्गलकलशमहोदरे ॥१॥
consecrated cups?"*

रतिनायकसायकमोचने ।



Thus Radha said



to Krishna at play



in her joyous heart,



"O, son of Yadu,

निजगाद सा यदुनन्दने क्रीडति हृदयानन्दने ॥धृ॥
अलिकुलगञ्जनसञ्जनकं

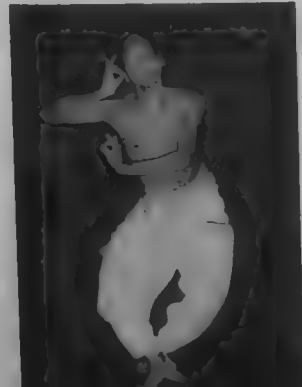
more black than the
swarming



O, Krishna,

bees

blacken my eyebrims



that shoot

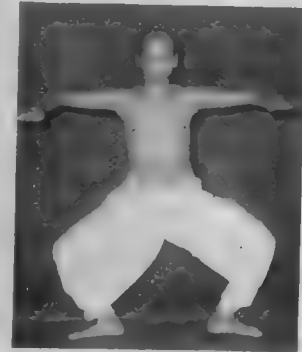


arrows of the Lord
of Love



Blacken my eyebrims,
Krishna"

BASIC STANCES



Chowka



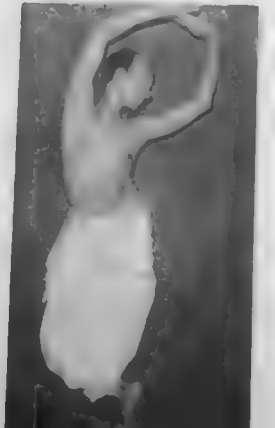
Kumbha Pada



Nataraja
Alasa

Tribhanga

Lolita Pada



The palm-leaf manuscripts give details of costumes and ornaments. The Maharis used to adorn themselves with many ornaments, but the present day exponents select a few to ensure that the movements are not too cumbersome. The tendency is to make the attire convenient for the dance movements, and yet gorgeous.

Since its revival in 1956 and from the time Indrani Rehman started presenting it on public platforms in 1958, the Odissi dance has gradually come into its own. Yamini Krishnamurthy, Ritha Devi, and later on Sonal Mansingh helped to arouse interest in this form. Among the better-known Oriya exponents are Sanjukta Panigrahi, Minati Misra and Kumkum Das. Three gurus, Pankajcharan Das, his disciple Kelucharan Mahapatra and Debuprasad Das have trained the Oriya and non-Oriya exponents of the dance. Other younger gurus like Surendranath Jena, Harekrishna Behra, Mayadhar Raut, Ramani Ranjan, Raghu Dutta and Shankar Behara train the artists in the cities. There is a State College of Dance and Music in Bhuvaneswar. The Kala Vikash Kendra, in Cuttack has rendered pioneering service in the propagation of Odissi dance.

In recent years the distinct style of Maharis as practised by Guru Pankajcharan Das and the Gotipua style imparted by his disciple, the renowned guru Kelucharan Mahapatra have helped to define the stylistic differences in the Odissi form. Each bears the mark of the individual genius of its exponent. As has happened in the case of other dance forms, Odissi, too, is undergoing a noticeable change. Today there is more emphasis on speed in pure dance pieces and, this accelerated pace often mars the beauty of line in pure dance postures.

References

- 1 Vatsyayan Kapila, *Classical Indian Dance in Literature and the Arts*, New Delhi, 1968, pp. 333-334.
- 2 Rajguru S. N., *Inscriptions of Orissa*, IV, p. 248.

यासी नेत्राञ्जलतरलिमा विस्ववस्यैकमन्त्रः

पादाभ्यासस्त्रिभुवनगतस्ताम्रं संविधत्ते ।

नृत्यारम्भे बलयमणिभिर्निर्मिताऽयत्नदीपा-

स्तम्भे दत्तास्त्रिभुवनि तेन तास्ता मृगाक्ष्यः ॥

"By her were dedicated to Lord Shiva some beautiful women, whose limbs were adorned with ornaments set in gems and thus appearing as the everlasting but playful lightnings, and who were restless with the weight of loins and breasts and whose eyes were fickle and extended up to the ears and who looked lovely like the pupils of the eyes of the men".

- 3 *Ibid*, p. 252.

"रत्नालङ्कितमृगिणाद्युष्मा देदीप्यमाना[वः]

[कीदृन्य] स्तदित स्त्रिया इव कुचशोणीभराव्याकुलाः ।

[सुन्दर्योनि] कनीयिका (का) इव ह्यशमन्तः प्रविष्टां नृणा-

मन्यै यञ्जलकञ्चनाम (म) नयना दत्तास्तयां दारिकां"।

"Whose eye-lashes constitute the very essence of captivating the whole world, whose very gait brings about a complete stillness in the activities of the three worlds, whose bangles

bejewelled with precious stones serve as unarranged candles during the dance, those deer-eyed maidens are offered in devotion to him (the Lord Shiva)".

- 4 *Kala Vikash Kendra Souvenir*, Cuttack, 1958, p. 21; *The Mahari* by Sadasiva Rath Sharma. I am quoting from a royal order which I found in the possession of an old Mahari called Buli.
- 5 The order prohibits the Maharis from having physical contact with men. "They should not dance in any festival except those of Lord Jagannath. After the initiation they should adorn their body with marks of *tilek* and *kali* and should put on *tulsimala* they should be led to the temple by the *Mina Nayak* on the occasion of the performance they should dance according to the directions in the *shastras* and think themselves to be the servants of the god. The dancer and the singer should progress in perfect co-operation It appears from the information that the dance was performed only for the Lord and the laity was not allowed to see it. The Rejguru, officiating for the Raja, used to remain present during the dance, holding the gold mounted cane as the symbol of the King's authority. The Maharis used to first bow to the Lord, then to the Rajaguru and then perform the dance.

The Maharis were of six categories: Bhitar Gauni, Bahar Gauni, Nachuni, Patuani, Raj Angila and Gahan Mahari. The Nachunis were allowed to dance only in the *nata-mandir*. They were not allowed to perform in the sanctum sanctorum. Only the Bhitar Gauni were privileged to sing and dance there. These servants of the gods were allotted specific streets near the temple. One of these was named Ange Alas Patan. Later on two officers were posted in each street to regulate the services of the Maharis.

- 6 It is translated into Oriya by Kavichandra Kalicharan Patanaik. Another manuscript of the *Abhinaya Chandrika* is in the possession of D. N. Patnaik, Assistant Secretary of the Orissa State Sangeet Natak Akademi.

7 The Jagannath Research Committee of Raghunandana Library at Puri and the Bhuvaneshwara Museum possess authentic manuscripts which shed valuable light on the practice of the Odissi dance.

- 8 *Odissi Dance* by D. N. Patnaik published by the Orissa Sangeet Natak Akademi, Bhubaneswar, 1971, p. 100; *Abhinaya Chandrika* published by Sadasiva Rath Sharma of the Jagannath Historical Research Society, Raghunandana Library, Emar Math, Puri, 1967, is annotated from the Sanskrit text of Maheshwara Mahapatra.

News and Notes

Festival of Bangla Desh Films, April 29 to May 5, Bombay

Twenty-seven years is not long enough to wipe out memories, but to one who was a toddler during Partition, the Festival came as a pleasant rediscovery. Neither the Partition of 1947 which put that part of Bengal into political isolation nor the war of liberation in 1971 has changed anything substantially in Bangla Desh.

The note of nostalgia began to prevail right at the start, during the inaugural ceremony. After the speeches and the bouquets had been delivered, a golden-voiced girl opened the cage and let a nightingale fly. Sabina Yasmin's four songs dimmed the harsh lights on the stage and filled the auditorium with a hush of gratitude. She made one thankful that the festival was there and that she was there in the Bangla Desh delegation.

Also thankful for *Lalon Fakir*. Hassan Iman's film about a roving minstrel of nineteenth century Bengal had an honesty one does not find in the films of the other Bengal. Rich in beautifully rendered songs and shots of wide, very wide rivers, the film's freshness seemed to rise from the very soil of the land. Hassan Iman has a cinematic style that may one day rise above mere competence. The extreme top-long shot of Lalon's grief-stricken mother crumbling in the courtyard of their hostile family home was a vignette out of a classic.

Four films were only mirror images of all that is commercial in the Indian cinema. There was Zahir Raihan's *Anwara*, about a village girl tormented by her step-mother and Kazi Zahir's *Abujh Mon* (The Stubbhorn Heart) about a golden-hearted Muslim doctor who cannot marry the Hindu girl he loves and later finds her married to his best friend. Subhas Dutt's *Abirbab* (The Advent) managed to stay a little sober. A childless couple finds a baby and adopts it. The real parents, separated earlier through misunderstandings, are reunited and come to claim the baby. Predictably, love wins over blood ties. Ataur Rahman's *Nawab Shireajuddaulah* was disappointing because of its incompetent direction and decor.

Only one film dealt with the war of liberation: *Ora Egaro Jan* (They Were Eleven), about a freedom-fighter named Khasru and his ten mates. A film made so soon after liberation and with real participants could have achieved a kind of documentary reality unheard of in the cinema of this subcontinent. But Chasi Nazrul Islam's direction weaves a fictional tale in which heroes are super-heroes and the villains of the Pakistani Army perpetrate atrocities and then meekly wait to be killed by the heroes. But the graphic documentary material that has been incorporated in the film's beginning and end—Sheikh Mujib's campaigns before 25th March and the surrender of the Pakistani Army in Dacca—held the spectator's interest. In one long shot

towards the end, the director established the grim irony of the war: Khasru walks towards a massive, dark building—the Pakistani Army's headquarters in Dacca—from whose tiny doors raped women pour out silently, without emotion, indifferent to the harsh light of freedom outside.

There is no Satyajit Ray or Mrinal Sen in Bangla Desh cinema. Not yet. But there is no cause for despair. Today, it is said, one can count more than a hundred films under production in Dacca at any one time. Maybe among those hundreds is a film that will make a mark.

— PRADIP PAUL

Guru T. Amudon Sharma, Nartan-Acharya Shiromani of Manipur

Guru Amudon Sharma breathed his last on Sunday, 10th March 1974, at the age of ninety at his residence in Imphal, Manipur. He traced his ancestry to the great dance teachers of Shri Govindji's Temple, which is the centre of all the activities of Manipur. Few living exponents of this Dance equalled him in the knowledge and technique of the traditional *Ras Leela*.

Guru Amudon Sharma served three generations of Maharajas of Manipur and the highest honour—Metel Jagoi Hanjaba (Nartan-Acharya Shiromani) and Pung Hanjaba (Mridanga Acharya Shiromani)—was conferred on him by Maharaja Bodhachandra Singh. The Sangeet Natak Akademi Award for Manipur Dancing and the Padmashri were conferred on him in 1960 and 1972 respectively. He was on the staff of the Nehru Dance College for a long period of time and the Head of Shri Govindji's Temple *Ras Leela* right till his death. He was also the guru of the Parimal Academy, Bombay.

Guru Amudon Sharma was a maestro in the true sense of the word. His disciples include T. Madhumangal Sharma, Irvant Singh of Thoubal, T. Rashbihari Sharma, B. Gopal Sharma, Thambalyaima Devi, Nirmala Khatau and Savita Mehta.

Kalamandalam Krishnan Nair

The sixtieth birthday of Kalamandalam Krishnan Nair, the famous Kathakali dancer, was celebrated throughout Kerala in the first week of April. A committee under the patronage of Mr. C. Achutha Menon, Chief Minister of Kerala, organised a full programme of cultural activity. A three-day festival was held at Tripunithura. It included a recital by Chemba Vaidyanatha Bhaga-

Book Reviews

BHARATIYA SANGEET VADYA by Lalmani Mishra, Bharatiya Jnanapitha, New Delhi, 1973, Rs. 40.00 (*In Hindi*).

There are very few books indeed in Hindi on our musical instruments. A work like this is, therefore, welcome and particularly so since the author is himself an instrumentalist.

The book comprises fourteen chapters. They are devoted to music in general, classification of instruments, strings, drums, winds, 'solid' instruments, instruments in the 'middle' ages, a comparative study of instruments, modern instruments, *raga-s* and *tala-s* on instruments, folk instruments, acoustics, social and emotional relations of instruments and instrumental music and a final summing up.

Chapter Two deals with the classification of instruments. *Inter alia*, Dr. Mishra refers to the importance of instruments in the development of music theory (p.12). This is a very important point and one which is often missed; perhaps Dr. Mishra could have dealt with this topic at greater length. He draws attention to the need for more detailed taxonomy than one which obtains now. This is true, and such attempts have been made (*Journal of the Musicological Society of India*, Vol. IV, 1) Dr. Mishra also suggests two classes, *tatanaddha* (chordo-membrano-phones) and *taranga-vadya* (*jaltarang*, *tabla tarang*, etc.) in addition to the usual four. While the first seems reasonable, the second requires careful consideration. In the book under review the classification is often mixed up. For example, the piano is grouped with the *santoor* and the *qanoon*. Again, the *shenai*, the *nagasvaram* and the flute are put together as "being played by blowing" (p. 17). The book also contains the statement that there are references in Vedic literature to *svara*, *tala*, *raga* and *geeta* (p. 19). No authority is quoted in support of this claim. The material on page 23 (*upasana kanda*) seems out of place. The chapter on stringed instruments lists nearly forty such instruments. There is also a detailed description of the ancient technique of playing the *veena*. One cannot agree with the author's statement (p. 40) that all modern stringed instruments with frets have their origin in the *kinnari*. The *kinnari*, like the *rudra veena* (now used in Northern India), was a zither; but the *sitar* and the *Saraswati veena* (now used in Southern India) are lutes. Morphologically they are very different, indeed, and whether the *chitra veena* was a lute or a harp is again a matter for discussion. The derivation of the *sarangi* from the *ravanastra* is also organologically incorrect (p. 53).

There are about thirty *avanaddha vadya* listed in the book. There is also a long and informative article on the *tabla*. Following the *Sangeeta Parijata*, the *mukhachanga* is classed with drums (p. 87). This is open to doubt; the *mukhachanga* should be placed among the *ghana vadya*.

vather and a presentation of the different styles of our traditional dance; seminars and discussions on the performing arts were also held.

Krishnan Nair was born on April 14, 1914 and was initiated into the art of Kathakali by the great guru Chanthu Panicker. He was one of the earliest to join the Kalamandalam founded by Poet Vallathol and received his training under the guidance of such teachers as Pattikanthodi Ramunni Menon, Kavalappara Narayanan Nair and Guru Kunchu Kurup and distinguished instrumentalists and vocalists associated with the School.

Krishnan Nair visited the United States and Europe in 1967, 1970, and 1972 and captivated audiences by his wonderful artistry. He won the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 1967 and was decorated with the Padma-shri in 1970. The title he covets most is that of Natya Ratna conferred on him by Rabindranath Tagore.

The Committee formed to honour Krishnan Nair has plans to set up a trust which will grant assistance to promising students of Kathakali.

Nanasaheb Phatak

Nanasaheb Phatak, veteran actor of the Marathi stage, died on April 8, 1974 in Bombay at the age of seventy-five. Nanasaheb began his stage career in the well-known company, *Lalitkaladarsha*. He played the role of the villain in the plays of Gadkari and Warerkar.

Nanasaheb was trained by the great actor Ganpatrao Joshi and as a result of this grooming, Marathi spectators had the good fortune to witness a remarkable interpretation of Hamlet, and of Peshwa Raghoba in Khadilkar's *Bhaubandki*. Nanasaheb played Macbeth in *Rajmukt*, Shirwadkar's adaptation of the play which was directed by Herbert Marshall for the Mumbai Marathi Sahitya Sangh. He also acted in a few films. Nanasaheb's two books *Mukhavatyache Jag* and *Smriti Sugandha* are a wonderful exposition of some of his roles and his experiences of the theatre.

Nanasaheb Phatak presided over the Drama Conference held at Hyderabad in 1956 and received the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 1960. The tradition of great actors in classical roles comes to an end with the death of Nanasaheb Phatak.

Of the instruments of the 'middle' ages, the author describes the *israj*, *kamaicha*, *quanoon*, *dilruba*, *sarod*, *sursingar* and nine others. There is, however, in many cases no textual evidence adduced to show that these instruments were introduced or developed during the 'middle' ages. For instance, while the *Sangeeta Parijata* does mention the *jaltarang* (the name used is different), so does a near contemporary, the *ashtachhap* poet Krishnadas. But the *Kamasutra* of Vatsyayana (third century A.D.) mentions an *udaka vadya* which might have been the *jaltarang*.

In the ninth chapter, page 124, the *ghatam* is included in the *avandha vadya*. It should be really considered as an idiophone and not a drum. This section has detailed descriptions of the *israj*, *tambura*, *dilruba*, *vichitra veena*, *sarod*, *santoor*, *sitar*, *khajira*, *tabla*, flute and so on. Again, the *ghatam* is bracketed with the *ganjira* (sic).

There is a longish chapter which describes *gat-s*, *uthan*, *mukhda*, *kaida* and so on.

The section on folk instruments has a paragraph on their classification (p. 170). Two classes are recognized: the melodic and the rhythmic. These, as the author says, are *functional* classes, unlike the fourfold grouping of 'concert' instruments. But, in both these areas, the classification can—and advisably must—have the same scheme. Otherwise there is no organological logic. This is particularly important because folk instruments are the bases out of which the concert ones have come into existence. Twenty-one idiophones, twenty-five membranophones, eighteen aerophones, twenty chordophones are briefly described.

There is a small chapter on the acoustics of instruments. This is a welcome addition, not usually found in our music books. There does not seem to be, however, any reasonable relation to the physics of sound and the "acoustic classification" of instruments.

The chapter on the social relations of organology and the *rasa* (emotional) use of instruments is again novel.

The book is well illustrated with two hundred and twenty pictures, inclusive of photographs and line drawings. The pictures of Western instruments and other non-Indian areas are superfluous because quite often they are in no way related to the text or to what is discussed therein.

There are some errors in the book. The *Rooper* harp (Fig. 1) has four strings; but the explanation says that it might have been tuned to three Vedic notes. Fig. 22 from Beloor (Karnataka) is a scraper (a *Kirikittaka*), but is described as a *drum*. No. 118 is a modern *tambura* (shown with wrongly placed pegs), but is called the *veena* of Narada and yet in the text itself the *veena* of Narada is described as one with twenty-one strings (a psaltery?).

A number of pictures have been reproduced from C.R. Day's *Music and Musical Instruments of Southern India* and P. Sambamoorthy's *Catalogue of Musical Instruments in the Government Museum (Madras)* but without acknowledgement of the source. At the end there are descriptions of illustrations in English; there is no need for this kind of addition in a Hindi book.

The author has collected a lot of material which till now has never been organized properly or brought together. Unfortunately, his presentation of this material lacks organological reasoning. For example, instruments are listed alphabetically, thus depriving the discussion of any musicological significance. They could have been grouped organologically, with an alphabetical list (with page references) appended. There is no index. This is a defect with most of the books in music in our languages and particularly of those that are printed versions of dissertations.

In spite of its defects, the book is a good beginning and deserves to be recommended to students of music.

—D

GURU DUTT (1925-1965). A Monograph by Firoze Rangoonwalla, National Film Archive of India, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Government of India, Poona, 1973 (*In English*). For distribution only.

Strangely enough, though a long and illustrious list of film-makers, right from Dadasaheb Phalke to Bimal Roy, preceded Guru Dutt, the first monograph brought out by the National Film Archive of India on a feature film-maker is devoted to Guru Dutt, a comparatively new entrant in the field. The only other monograph published by the National Film Archive of India is about the famous documentary film-maker Dr. Pathy. Either the Archive failed to entrust the work to competent historians or perhaps the writers who were charged with the task of preparing monographs on Phalke and other veterans have not yet completed their assignments.

I do not wish to suggest that Guru Dutt is not a fit subject for a monograph. There is no doubt that among commercial film-makers Guru Dutt holds a pre-eminent position comparable to that of Bimal Roy, Raj Kapoor and Hrishikesh Mukerjee. Firoze Rangoonwalla has done a neat job of compiling the data, filmography and articles about and by Guru Dutt. But the more controversial part of the book is Rangoonwalla's own critical assessment of Guru Dutt, the man and the artist on the one hand, and Guru Dutt, the film-maker and actor, on the other.

There are certain factual errors in the book. Rangoonwalla states that Dev Anand's *Navketan*, an established concern, invited Guru Dutt to direct *Baazi* for him. It is worth noting that prior to *Baazi*, Dev Anand's

Navketan had produced only one film, namely *Afsar*. It was directed by Chetan Anand and failed to create an impact. In fact, it was the success of *Baazi* which established *Navketan* as a production concern. Those who recollect box-office records will also question Rangoonwalla's statement about *Sangram*'s relative failure. Gyan Mukerji's *Sangram* did as well at the box-office as the two films *Baazi* and *Aar Paar*, made by his disciple, Guru Dutt. Rangoonwalla's assumption that the hero of *Baazi* can be said to reflect Guru Dutt's own dreams of projecting himself in a similar image is not correct. The hero of *Baazi* was designed mainly to create a new image of Dev Anand. One has only to see Dev Anand's pre-*Baazi* and post-*Baazi* work to realise that it is the *Baazi* image by which Dev Anand is known even today.

According to Rangoonwalla himself, Guru Dutt decided to act in films only because he could not get the stars he wanted. While Dev Anand's stock soared high after *Baazi*, Guru Dutt could derive no benefit, as an actor, from the success of *Aar Paar*. Indeed, except in the case of *12 O'clock*, he was never cast by any producer in a role reminiscent of either *Baazi* or *Aar Paar*. Though commercial compulsions forced Guru Dutt to produce crime thrillers, it was only in *Pyaasa* that he emerged as an important filmmaker and actor. Rangoonwalla has dealt at length on the importance of *Pyaasa*, for, more than any other film it revealed Guru Dutt's own attitude to life and art. Rangoonwalla considers *Pyaasa* Guru Dutt's best contribution. I myself prefer *Kaagaz Ke Phool*, because it was more uncompromising and artistic than even *Pyaasa*. It bore his personal signature in almost every shot and reminded one of Chaplin's *Limelight*.

The failure of *Kaagaz Ke Phool* and the success of *Chaudhwin Ka Chand* illustrate not so much the failure of Guru Dutt, the artist, as the inability of film audiences to appreciate a true work of art. One tends to agree with Rangoonwalla's criticism of the selection of *Chaudhwin Ka Chand* for the Moscow festival. It is said that in Moscow, Guru Dutt hardly ever stirred out of the hotel. He was under great emotional stress. Rangoonwalla makes no reference to this fact or to the various mental strains in Guru Dutt's life. These difficulties affected not only his work as an artist, but finally even cost him his life. There are places where Rangoonwalla contradicts himself. At one point referring to *Pyaasa* he says, "It is also a rare case of a Hindi film with an extremely compact and precise construction." On another page he states, "All the turns of the script were not thought out... so that weak and false links occurred in a few spots."

Rangoonwalla seems equally concerned about the artistic merit of a film and the box-office reaction to it. The financial success of *Pyaasa* appears to him as important as the failure of *Kaagaz Ke Phool* at the box-office.

Summing up Guru Dutt's contribution, Rangoonwalla observes, "Guru did his duty of enriching the country's cinema with novel concepts of art and entertainment... He tried to give new shapes to the medium, playing on its infinite possibilities. He did technical pioneering, like introduction of Cinemascope. He discovered new talents in different fields and

shaped the careers of many. His sociological contribution, even if on an indirect level, was also immense. ... Guru did it with a measure of realism and urgency ... without any ideological credo".

Rangoonwalla has not summed up the contribution made by Guru Dutt, the actor. It was the image he created in *Pyaasa* which made Guru Dutt popular as an actor. Rangoonwalla does not discuss in detail Guru Dutt's outstanding performance in *Sautela Bhai* and *Sahib Bibi Aur Ghulam* or, for that matter, why Asif chose him to play the role of Majnu. The monograph does not do full justice to Guru Dutt, who became an actor out of necessity but later developed an acting style of his own. Guru Dutt's contribution as a filmmaker is not fully defined. For instance, there is no effort to correlate his slightly vacillating, introverted personality, his individualistic and somewhat pessimistic outlook in life, with his two 'personal' films, *Pyaasa* and *Kaagaz Ke Phool*. It was when Guru Dutt tried to portray the tragedy of a poet or a film director ignored by society that he revealed his sensitive and thorough grasp of the film medium.

In spite of these shortcomings, Rangoonwalla's work needs to be welcomed. It is informative and well-documented, and its subject is the most 'conscious' of the commercial film-makers of the post-war era in Bombay.

—V. P. SATHE

HINDI EKANKI: SWARUP AUR VISHALESHAN by Dr. Ramesh Tiwari, Smriti Prakashan, Allahabad, 1973, Rs. 6.00 (*In Hindi*).

Dr. Tiwari's book on the Hindi one-act play is likely to prove of interest to the student of Hindi drama. The book is divided into eight chapters: the birth and history of the one-act play and its form; the history and origin of the Hindi one-act play; representative one-act plays and playwrights of Hindi; and the changing dramatic idiom and new developments. There is a general summing up with a chapter on the Hindi theatre, its development and its present state. The writer considers the Hindi one-act play a western derivative. He believes that the Sanskrit *Ank*, *Bhana*, *Beethi* of the *Dasharupak*, though they were one-act dramas, fell into a totally different category. He does not explain the reasons which prompt him to make this distinction.

After discussing the nature, origin and development of the Hindi one-act play, Dr. Tiwari goes on to analyse the one-act plays written by Bhuvaneshwar, Ramkumar Verma, Seth Govind Das, Uday Shankar Bhatt, Upendra Ashk, Sumitranandan Pant, Bhagwaticharan Varma, J.C. Mathur, Vishnu Prabhakar and Lakshmi Narain Lal. These chapters do not reveal any new facets of the Hindi one-act plays or of the playwrights. They are, in fact, academic repetitions of established theories on the subject.

The second half of the book discusses the language of theatre. One can have no disagreement with Dr. Tiwari's general contention about the language of drama being replete with creative qualities. But one cannot ignore the fact that language has not developed in abstraction; it is closely linked with social change.

Dr. Tiwari feels that the bulk of our dramatic writing echoes not hopelessness but deep discontent, anger, the desire for social and political change. But he does not pinpoint the directions of new social transformations or discuss those plays which reflect them. He considers Mohan Rakesh the most important dramatist in Hindi. Yet social change is hardly the main ingredient in Rakesh's plays. The writer concedes that the theatre today is confined to the elite; he also says that there is a scarcity of stage-worthy plays in the Hindi language. But he does not offer any positive suggestions about new lines of development and the steps which need to be taken to accelerate them.

—BHAGWATI P. SHARMA

PARSI-HINDI RANGMANCH by Dr. Lakshminarayan Lal, Rajpal and Sons, Delhi, 1973, Rs. 20.00 (*In Hindi*).

Dr. Lal's book is a fairly good introduction to the origin, development and decline of the Parsi-Hindi theatre. It is of particular interest to the Hindi reader, for this material was not so readily available to him till now. The writer has been closely associated with the Hindi theatre, and he, therefore, feels that it is absolutely essential for a theatre to understand its immediate past. Without such knowledge it is impossible to create its present. That is why the writer found it necessary to study the theatre traditions of the past, and the book under review is the result of this sincere striving.

Dr. Lakshminarayan Lal is himself a well-known Hindi playwright and he studies the Parsi theatre because he believes that it is essentially a part of Hindi theatre tradition and culture.

The book has been divided into nine chapters. The first two define the term "Parsi Theatre" and trace its development. The third deals with its nature and scope. The fourth is the most important section of the book. Dr. Lal divides the history of the Parsi theatre into four periods: its birth (1853-1900); its development (1901-1917); its flowering (1918-1940); and its decline (1940-1960).

In these sections, Dr. Lal describes representative playwrights and productions, and introduces the well-known actors, actresses and the companies of that era. The pictures in the book have been collected after a lot

of search and effort. The part dealing with the period 1918 to 1940 is very important. It was then that the Parsi theatre tried to base itself on social reality. Narayan Prasad 'Betab', Agha Hashra Kashmiri and Radheyshyam 'Kathavachak' were the three important playwrights of this era. They attempted to reorient the Parsi theatre, by dispensing with commercialism. They tried to relate the theatre to the process of social change. Dr. Lal examines the patriotic and nationalist tendencies in the writings of these playwrights and concludes that these aspects of their work are important enough to place the Parsi theatre in the mainstream of the Indian theatre tradition. He has divided the plays of this period into three categories: romantic, revivalist and mythological.

The fifth, sixth and seventh chapters of the book discuss stage technique and the related problems of stagecraft, acting styles, scenery and lighting. They offer us a glimpse into the rather unsentimental, yet 'live' nature of the productions of those times. One realises that despite its commercial bias, the Parsi theatre was able to evolve a particular dramatic idiom of its own, one which differed at one level from the *Nautanki-Bhagat* tradition, and yet achieved the popularity of the folk theatre.

In the ninth chapter Dr. Lal makes a comparative study of the Parsi theatre and the Hindi theatre of the time. He has not been able to analyse with any degree of clarity the influence of the Parsi theatre on Hindi dramatists like Bharatendu and Jaishankar Prasad. Dr. Lal has failed to live up to the promise held out in the introduction to this book.

Another shortcoming in the book is the complete absence of any serious analysis of the mixed cultures reflected in the Parsi theatre. Dr. Lal has not shown us how the Parsi theatre, which began with a projection of pro-British and feudal values, started, in a limited degree, to reflect changing social patterns.

At the end of the book Dr. Lal gives us a short summary of some Parsi plays, and descriptions of the posters and other material circulated by companies to advertise these plays. More details of this kind would have added to the appeal of the book.

—SUDHISH PACHAURI

NATAK KE TATVA: SIDHANTA AUR SAMEEKSHA by Vishnukumar Tripathi 'Rakesh', Smriti Prakashan, Allahabad, 1973, Rs. 7.00 (*In Hindi*).

The book is an introduction to the general principles of drama in language which the average reader can understand. Though the writer claims acquaintance with trends in modern Indian and Western theatre, his approach and treatment of the subject is anything but modern.

In the introductory section he discusses certain aspects of Sanskrit poetics, before coming to the main subject of his book, namely drama. The second chapter entitled *Tatva Nirnaya* (Criteria of Theory) is rather pedantic in its approach and contains many irrelevant details.

The third chapter introduces the theory of plot with reference to Indian poetics. The fourth chapter deals with dialogue; the fifth with stage directions. In the concluding chapter the author deals with the literary value of drama. There is a long list of reference books in English, Sanskrit and Hindi at the end of the book. But the reader can derive little benefit from it. The way in which the material in the book is organised leaves much to be desired. The book's verbose and descriptive style runs counter to the kind of analytical approach so essential for a critical study of the subject.

—SUDHISH PACHAURI

Record Reviews

PANDIT OMKARNATH THAKUR speaks and sings. Side One: a talk on Bilawal; Side Two: *Khayal* in Alhaiya Bilwal: *Daiya khan gailo*. HMV ECX 3303.

NIKHIL BANERJEE (Sitar): Jaunpuri and Mand. Tabla: Swapan Chowdhury. HMV EASD 1378 (Stereo).

N. RAMANI (Flute) with M. S. Gopalakrishnan (Violin), Vellore Ramabhadran (Mridangam) and Syam Sunder (Kanjira). Side One: *Natai*, *Ravichandrika*, *Ranjani*; Side Two: *Madhyamavati*, *Ahir Bhairav*. HMV EASD 1390 (Stereo).

PANDIT RAM NARAYAN (Sarangi); Suresh Talwalkar (Tabla). Side One: *Bairagi-Bhairav*; Side Two: *Madhuvanti*, *Kirvani*. OCORA (Office de Radiodiffusion—Télévision Française). OCR 69 (Stereo).

Pandit Omkarnath Thakur's disc has been made possible, like an earlier disc of his, as well as discs by other masters like Ustad Fayyaz Khan, by courtesy of All India Radio. This is another offering to the public from A.I.R.'s rich archives and is an unusual one. One side is devoted to a talk by Panditji (in Hindi) on the true nature of the *raga* Bilawal. Should it be considered a fully developed *raga* with its own personality or is it essentially a *thaat*? This is a thought-provoking talk with its incisive analytical exposition and its forthright advocacy of the point the speaker wishes to stress. Here is the voice of wisdom and experience and young musicians should listen to it and ponder over it. The second side is devoted to the *raga* Alhaiya Bilawal which Panditji sings in his usual style and with much aplomb—dramatic, emotional, full of a fervour which he communicates to the listener.

Nikhil Banerjee should surely be considered one of our most accomplished and serious sitar players today. His balanced and mature approach to music, his control over the medium and altogether a feeling of high seriousness in his playing make him stand out among his contemporaries and this augurs well for the future of Hindustani instrumental music. There is nothing in his playing that is irrelevant to serious music-making and it has almost everything that is relevant to it. One side of the disc is devoted to Jaunpuri. This is in the traditional, almost austere mould of the great Allaudin Khan with, here and there, the poetry and the delicacy of an individual *gayaki* style. The result is that the *alap* is robust, developed methodically, with a consistency of style. The *gat*, particularly the *vilambit*, is spacious, and well-spaced. The Mand on the other side is light but it is not the lightness of effervescent froth, but the lightness of delicate nuances, of decorative invention that is the essence of our folk tradition. On both sides Swapan Chowdhury, the young talented tabla player, accompanies

with competence and understanding. The quality of the pressing, alas, is by no means perfect.

Another young musician who, like Nikhil Banerjee in the North, has gained in stature in the South is the flautist Ramani. He is a pupil of the incomparable Mahalingam. Ramani has inherited a good many of his master's fine points and he has brought to them a discipline of his own. The smooth tone, the rounded *gamakas*, the tight control over *laya* are all there. What a fine sense of legato he has brought to the *Madhyamavati* and what expression to Syama Sastri's *Palinchi Kamakshil*! The sleeve notes describe the *Ri* of *Nattai* as *chatusruti*. The *Ri* of *Nattai* is *shatsruti*. This is a very important point and it is precisely this that gives *Nattai* its distinctive character. Both the *Ri* and the *Dha* are of the *shatsruti* variety, practically of the same value as *Sadharana Ga* and *Kaisakhi Ni*.

Finally, a fine and distinguished recording by Pandit Ram Narayan (alas, not available in the Indian market), an ORTF offering. The technical quality is excellent, stereo used meaningfully and to good purpose; the notes by Prof. Tran Van Khe, accurate and to the point; and the whole production elegant and in good taste. Three *ragas* are featured on this — *Bairagi-Bhairav*, *Kirvani* and *Madhuvanti*. The *Kirvani* is very much in the Hindustani style with a brittle charm of its own. Suresh Talwalkar is the accompanist.

— N. M

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